Proclus' Hymns

ESSAYS,

TRANSLATIONS, COMMENTARY

BY

R. M. VAN DEN BERG

BRILL PHILOSOPHIA ANTIQUA

PROCLUS' HYMNS

PHILOSOPHIA ANTIQUA

A SERIES OF STUDIES ON ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

VOLUME XC

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BRILL
LEIDEN · BOSTON · KÖLN
2001

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is also available.

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Berg, R.M. van den:
Proclus' hymns : essays, translations, commentary / by R.M. van den Berg. – Leiden ; Boston ; Köln : Brill, 2001
(Philosophia antiqua ; Vol. 90)
ISBN 90–04–12236–2

ISSN 0079-1687
ISBN 90 04 12236 2

Cover illustration: Alje Olthof
Cover design: Cédilles / Studio Cursief, Amsterdam

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

To my parents

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PREFACE

This book is a lightly revised version of a Ph.D. dissertation which was submitted to the Faculty of Philosophy at Leiden University and subsequently publicly defended on September 7, 2000. A post-doctoral fellowship as part of the newly inaugurated program of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Studies at Trinity College, Dublin enabled me to prepare the manuscript for press.

Scholarship is not, or at least should not be a solitary adventure. The present study thus owes much to many. It is with pleasure that I here record my deepest debts. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor D.T. Runia for his assistance and encouragement over the years as well as A. Sheppard, who accepted to act as assistant supervisor of the thesis. Furthermore, I am deeply obliged to J. Dillon, H.D. Saffrey, and C. Steel for their expert advice and inspiring scholarship, to J. Sen for his help with the English, and to my former colleague M. van Gool for his stimulating companionship.

My work benefited greatly from a three month stay in 1998 at the Institute of Philosophy (Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte) in Leuven and another in 1999 at the UPR 76 of the CNRS in Paris. My thanks go to both institutes for their warm hospitality and to the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) for its financial support on both occasions.

Dublin, May 2001 Robbert M. van den Berg

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*
DDD	K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, P.W. van der Horst (edd.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, Leiden 1995.
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)*
OCD	S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (edd.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford 1996^{3}.
PW	G. Wissowa *et al.*, *Pauly's Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft.*
RAC	*Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum*
TLG	Thesaurus Linguae Graecae CD-Rom #D

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Part One

ESSAYS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. *Worship in the dusty museum of metaphysical abstractions*

Some time after the life of Proclus (ca. 410/11 A.D.-April 17, 485 A.D.)[1] had come to an end the members of the Neoplatonic school at Athens gathered in one of the spacious villas on the southern slope of the Acropolis that housed the institution. They had come to hear Marinus deliver an eulogy on the late Proclus whom he had succeeded as head of the school. Spirits were low. The passing away of the towering figure of Proclus, albeit worn down by old age in his last years, meant a severe blow to a community that was under steadily growing pressure from the Christian authorities. No longer they could feel safe under the aegis of Athena. It was gone. The immense statue by Pheidias that had crowned the Acropolis for ages had been removed by 'those who move that which should not be moved,' as they cautiously referred to the Christians in a coded phrase. She now dwelt with her last loyal followers in the villa of the school, after she had announced to Proclus in a dream that 'the Lady of Athena wishes to live with you.' With Proclus they had at least had the guarantee that the gods would protect them against the 'typhonic winds' of Christianity. He had been especially beloved by them from his youth onwards, as had become evident on many occasions: when he arrived at Athens as a young student, the gate-keeper told him that he would have closed if Proclus had not come, a clear sign that the continuation of the Platonic tradition had depended on him alone; divine powers had regularly appeared to him, inspired him when he lectured and studied, and came to his aid or that of others when he requested it. But now the destiny that he had prophesied for himself at the beginning of his forty-second year, when by divine inspiration he had cried aloud in verses that his soul would rise up to the stars, had come to pass. The esteemed speaker, Marinus, was an

[1] The date of Proclus' birth is a debated question, since evidence from Marinus' *Vita Procli* is confused. On the issue, see Siorvanes 1996: 25f. Jones 1999 has now put forward February 7, 412 A.D. as Proclus' date of birth.

altogether different story. Although evidently full of respect for the gods, his limited intellectual capacities showed that he was not their favoured mouth-piece as Proclus had been.

Our principal source for the miraculous in Proclus' life is the very speech that Marinus delivered that day, known under the title ΠΡΟΚΛΟΣ Η ΠΕΡΙ ΕΥΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑΣ (*Vita Procli*). It portrays Proclus as a very religious man, who worshipped as many gods as he could. Not so much because of a private interest, but because he and his followers firmly believed that this was a major task of the head of the school: he was the hierophant of the whole world. The gods of mythology and popular cult, if viewed correctly, coincided with the abstract metaphysical entities that constituted the elaborate structure of Neoplatonic metaphysics. Doing philosophy meant worshipping the gods. In order to make the traditional gods fit their philosophy, the later Neoplatonists needed to strip them of their human features. All those stories about jealous, hot-tempered gods and goddesses fighting and loving each other were explained away. E.R. Dodds (1963^2: 106) concluded from this: 'That Homer's Olympians, the most vividly conceived anthropomorphic beings in all literature, should have ended their career on the dusty shelves of this museum of metaphysical abstractions is one of time's strangest ironies.' Dodds' characterisation fails to do full justice to Proclus' gods. To him, they were more than just metaphysical abstractions. They were beings with whom he could enter into direct contact, like many Greeks had done before. Although we sometimes glimpse Proclus' religious sentiments in his scholarly work, it is especially in his hymns that these come to light. H.D. Saffrey puts it thus in the preface to his translation of the hymns:

> Dans leurs écrits, les Anciens ne parlent presque jamais d'eux-mêmes ni de leur vie privée. Mais il arrive que leurs prières prennent un caractère autobiographique. Cela se vérife dans le cas des hymnes de Proclus. Ils sont tous composés de la même façon. Ils commencent par une première strophe qui est proprement un éloge du dieu ou de la déesse, auquel s'adresse le philosophe. … Tout à coup cette incantation s'arrête. Le ton change. Une voix s'élève. Celui qui s'exprime est alors Proclus lui-même. Il prie, il supplie, il formule ses demandes d'une manière tout à fait personelle (Saffrey 1994: 19).

If the learned commentaries, the voluminous *Theologia Platonica* and the systematic *Elements of Theology* present us with a view of philosophical and doctrinal Later Neoplatonism, the hymns — according to Marinus often composed in the nocturnal hours when Proclus

could not sleep — show us what it meant to be a Neoplatonist. To these hymns this study is dedicated.

2. *The corpus*

Today we possess only a fraction of Proclus' hymns. Seven of them, the object of this study, have been preserved in a collection of MSS. that contain a compilation of Greek hymns. Apart from those by Proclus, it consists of the *Homeric Hymns*, those by Callimachus and the so-called *Orphic Hymns*. There must have been more. Marinus *Vita Procli* § 19 refers to hymns in honour of exotic deities like Marnas of Gaza, Asclepius Leontuchos of Ascalon, some Arabic god called Thyandrites, and Isis. John of Lydia (± 490-565) *De Mensibus* 23, 9 (ed. Wuensch) cites a verse from an unknown hymn by Proclus (Fr. II in edition Vogt 1957: 33). Olympiodorus (born around 495) quotes twice another verse by Proclus (quoted in its correct form *In Phd.* 1 § 5, 16; in an incorrect form *In Alc.* 1, 62 = Fr. I edition Vogt 1957: 33). Two other hymns, the *Homeric Hymn to Ares* and the anonymous *Hymn to God*, are sometimes ascribed to Proclus. These attributions will be discussed below.

As for the tradition of the seven hymns in the above-mentioned compilation, the archetype must have arrived in Italy at the waves of the fall of the Byzantine empire, for none of the 34 MSS. dates further back than the fifteen century and the oldest all originate from Italy. The careful edition by E. Vogt (1957) replaces all 24 previous ones, among which notably those by Cousin (1864²: 1315-1323) and Ludwich (1897: 117-158).[2] In this study we have not undertaken afresh an examination of all the MSS., but we have consulted (reproductions of) two of the prime witnesses: C (*Ambrosianus 425*) and E (*Laurentianus XXXII 45*).[3] The few cases in which we have decided to diverge from Vogt's text have been noted in the text which is printed before the commentary on each individual hymn.

One aspect of the tradition deserves special attention. It will be noted that we have placed the titles of the hymns between brackets. The reason for this is that, since they were probably inserted by

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[2] See also Vogt 1957b (a companion-article to the edition) and Vogt 1966 (a discussion of an manuscript not noted in the edition).

[3] A new edition for the series of the *Collection des Universités de France* (better known as the Budé-series) has been projected.

Gemistos Plethon, they must have been absent from the archetype.[4] Since the hymns are usually referred to by these titles, this fact is easily forgotten. A misleading situation results from this, as is best illustrated in the case of the sixth hymn. It has been given the title ΥΜΝΟΣ ΚΟΙΝΟΣ ΕΚΑΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΙΑΝΟΥ. Ever since it has been readily assumed that this hymn addresses two deities, whereas a close reading reveals that Proclus actually invokes three gods (see my introduction to the hymn).

West (1970) has claimed the *Homeric Hymn to Ares* for Proclus. He supports this attribution along the following line of argumentation: since the hymn to Ares is generally acknowledged to be later in date than the rest of the *Homeric Hymns*, and since it is impossible that it comes from anywhere else than the corpus of collected hymns, it has to be either Orphic or Proclean (Callimachus is obviously not its composer). The similarity with the Orphic hymns is only superficial. On the other hand, there are noticeable parallels between the hymns by Proclus and the *Hymn to Ares* in style and diction as well as in content.

Gelzer (1987) has effectively demolished this claim.[5] First, he shows that the hymn to Ares was already present in MSS. of the *Homeric Hymn*s that did not contain the Orphic and Proclean hymns. Hence, it makes no sense to postulate that the hymn to Ares necessarily belongs to either one of these groups. He recognizes some of the parallels in diction and style between Proclus' hymns and the hymn to Ares, but he explains them by assuming that Proclus had read this hymn. Furthermore, he stresses the dissimilarities in content. Finally, he ventures the hypothesis that the hymns were the product of someone who belonged to the circle of Plotinus. Although I hesitate to accept the latter hypothesis, it seems to me that Gelzer demonstrates beyond doubt that this hymn is not by Proclus. The content of the requests in the hymn to Ares is very different from those in Proclus' hymns. We note here especially that the whole idea of *epistrophe* (the return of the fallen soul to its divine cause) is absent, whereas it is the core of Proclus' hymns (as will be discussed in chapter III § 3.2). Furthermore, it is not implausible that Proclus took some of his inspiration from this hymn. *H.* II 13 shows that

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[4] As appears implicitly from Vogt's *apparatus* and is stated explicitly by Westerink 1957: 370 and Saffrey 1994: 20.

[5] Cf. Saffrey 1994: 75 who follows Gelzer in rejecting West's hypothesis.

Proclus had read the collection of *Homeric Hymns* attentively and used them in composing his own hymns.

Another hymn sometimes ascribed to Proclus is the Ὕμνος εἰς θεόν included among the poems by Gregory of Nazianzus (1, 1, 29 PG 37, 507-508).[6] Gregory's authorship of this has been questioned for a long time. Cousin and Jahn in the nineteenth century already sought to ascribe it to Proclus. For a detailed discussion of the matter the reader is referred to Sicherl (1988). We summarize here his findings. First, he shows by a careful study of the textual tradition that the hymn must have penetrated into the Gregorian corpus from the outside. Second, he demonstrates that the content of the hymn resists attribution to Gregory, who can thus be dropped from the discussion. Next, he turns to Proclus as a candidate for its authorship. The textual tradition does not provide any support for an attribution to Proclus. The content is clearly Neoplatonic and there are numerous parallels with Proclus, especially with his commentary on the *Parmenides*. Although this is a clear indication that the hymn is not by Gregory, it does not decide the case for Proclus. For these Neoplatonic ideas and diction are not restricted to Proclus and may also be found in other authors like ps.-Dionysius Areopagitus, who was heavily influenced by Proclus' commentary on the *Parmenides*. Sicherl puts him forward as a likely candidate. On the one hand, the hymn celebrates the highest god as veiled in an cloud impenetrable even to the heavenly minds. This mystical darkness that cloaks god is absent from Proclus, but a recurrent topic in Christian authors. On the other hand, the hymn features in some MSS. that contain the works of ps.-Dionysius. Therefore it seems likely that the hymn his work.[7]

3. *Proclus' hymns in twentieth century scholarship*

Proclus' hymns have never failed to attract a readership. The testimonies quoted in § 2 show that they continued to be read during whatever little was left of Antiquity. The Renaissance Neoplatonists too, verging on paganism as they did, were attentive readers of the hymns. Gemistos Plethon showered his copy with notes. Remarkably

[6] For an English translation, see Rosán 1949: ix (Greek text p. 54); for a French translation with opposing Greek text, see Saffrey 1994: 78-9.

[7] Sicherl's conclusion is shared by Saffrey 1994: 75 who adds that the poverty of the poetry of the hymn is not in favour of an attribution to Proclus.

enough, his study of them has left no traces in the hymns that he composed for his *Laws*. It was probably Ficino, that prolific translator of all texts Platonic, who made the first translation of the (first five) hymns (in Latin of course).[8] However, although numerous translations (among others one by the famous British Platonist Thomas Taylor) and editions continued to appear, most of it is of limited use for the modern student of the hymns.[9] This situation reflects the enormous progress that has been made in the past century in Proclean scholarship. The production of reliable texts and translations — inaugurated by E.R. Dodds' epochal edition of the *Elements of Theology* (1933) — has led to an increasingly better understanding of his thought, resulting both in a number of books dedicated to Proclus in general and in studies of various particular aspects of his philosophy.[10]

Wilamowitz (1907) precedes these developments. As was so often the case with his opinions, his outspoken, if debatable, verdict has become proverbial: (Proclus' hymns are) '*leere Hülsen, und eigentlich paßt der Kern seines Glaubens nicht mehr hinein.*' Wilamowitz' treatment of the hymns does not display any profound insight into Neoplatonism. All the same, some of his observations concerning the Greek text merit attention. Meunier (1935) made the hymns more accessible to a larger audience by producing an annotated French translation, as did Giordano (1957) for an Italian public. Even the Dutch market was catered for by De Jong (1952). Unfortunately, they did not undertake any real effort to clarify what they had translated.

The above-mentioned edition of Vogt (1957) meant a milestone in the study of the hymns. Not only did he produce the best edition of the text (including the fragments and the epigrams by Proclus) until now, but he also added a rich *apparatus fontium et locorum*, which was to considerably facilitate further research. However, such an *apparatus*, useful as it may be in its own right, is not a commentary, let alone an interpretation of the hymns. A good commentary needs a sense of direction. Heaping together parallels does not automatically produce insight. The first to point the way was Gelzer (1966) in an article

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[8] Cf. Vogt 1957: 23; they have been published by Ilana Klutstein 1987: 111-115.

[9] Vogt 1957: 20-22 lists all previous editions, pp. 23-24 list all previous translations.

[10] Books that may serve as an introduction to Proclus are: Rosán 1949; Beierwaltes 1979^2; Trouillard 1982; Siorvanes 1996. The literature before 1949 is collected in Rosán 1949: 3-10; for the period 1949-1992, see Muth 1993; Siorvanes 1996: 317-330 too provides the reader with a very detailed and useful bibliography.

dedicated to Proclus' two surviving epigrams. He makes Proclus' own theory of poetry the framework for the interpretation of his epigrams. We shall discuss this theory in chapters V and VI. Essential to this theory is that some poets, especially Homer, contain wisdom revealed to them by the gods. This wisdom is cloaked in symbolism. The philosopher who has gained insight into this symbolism may in his turn employ parts and pieces of this poetry to construct his own. This implies that the student of Proclus' hymns must not content himself to listing parallels between Proclus and these symbolic poets. He should also try to discover Proclus' — sometimes rather unexpected — interpretations of the source-text and then see how this interpretation fits in the context of the hymn under discussion. Erler (1987) has applied this procedure to *H.* II to Aphrodite. The way in which he does so, however, differs from my approach. He postulates that the interpretation of the hymn should be based on one symbolical adjective (vs. 1 Aphrogeneia). To my mind, Proclus nowhere suggests that this is the way in which to read symbolical poetry, even not in the passages from the commentary on the *Cratylus* that Erler produces in support of his approach.

The greatest contribution to the study of the hymns since Vogt's edition has been made by H.D. Saffrey. From his hand are articles on the hymn to Helios (Saffrey 1984[a]), the hymn to the Muses (1992[b]), as well as *H.* IV (Saffrey 1981[b]), which in his view addresses the gods of the Chaldaean Oracles. If this were not enough, he has also produced a splendid translation (Saffrey 1994). His profound knowledge of Proclus comes to the fore in all these publications. This is not to say that I always find myself in complete agreement with them. Apart from several cases of the interpretation of details, I diverge in particular from him where the identity of the gods of *H.* IV is concerned (see my introduction to that hymn).

4. *Aims and structure of this study*

This study aims at interpreting Proclus' hymns in the context of his philosophy. To my mind, the hymns in Proclus' oeuvre are not a marginal phenomenon without much philosophical significance, as is the poetry of Plato (assuming that the epigrams ascribed to him are his indeed) and Aristotle. Rather, one can state without exaggeration that hymns are at the very heart of Proclus' philosophical enterprise:

the reversion (*epistrophe*) of the human soul upon the divine world. Conceived as such, doing philosophy itself becomes singing hymns to the gods. For Proclus, the difference between his hymns and Plato's *Parmenides* is one of form, not one of content. Chapter II examines this pivotal position of the hymn in the thought of Proclus. The equation of doing philosophy with hymn-singing may not come out of the blue, but the Athenian Neoplatonists elaborated it in an systematic way that had never been seen before, as appears from their use of the verb ὑμνεῖν and their interpretation of the *Parmenides* as a hymn. We may regard it as characteristic for their approach to philosophy. It reflects the typical theological orientation of their Platonism.

The next chapters examine how Proclus' hymns are supposed to bring this movement of reversion about. First, Chapter III seeks to pinpoint the gods invoked in the hymns in the divine hierarchy. It will be argued that these belong to two categories of rather minor gods: the so-called leader-gods and gods that imbue us with divine madness. This is not a coincidence. Both groups contribute in their own way to the elevation of the human soul to the divine realm. The leader-gods have the power to establish us in the divine Nous of the Demiurge. This appears to be a important step in the ascent of the human soul. The divine madness too is a strong elevating force, for those touched by it lose themselves into the divine.

I suggest that it is theurgy that lends the hymns their efficiency for attracting the elevating powers of the gods. Chapter IV offers an outline of this most amazing aspect of later Neoplatonism. It culminates in the hypothesis that there is a very close relationship between the leader-gods and theurgy.

Chapter V focuses on the mechanisms of theurgy as we find them in the hymns. It is here that Proclus' theory of poetry comes in, for poetical symbolism is somehow related to theurgy. A study of these mechanisms not only helps us to better understand what goes on in the hymns, but also enhances our understanding of theurgy. First, the hymns show us theurgy in action. Second, it appears from the hymns that two sorts of theurgy that are usually distinguished in scholarly literature — a higher sort of theurgy aiming at elevation of the human soul and a lower sort aiming at procuring earthly goods like health and prosperity — merge in the hymns.

Chapter VI, finally, is entirely concerned with Proclus' theory of poetry. It addresses afresh a question that has received much

attention in the past years: what is the difference between a poetical symbol (σύμβολον) that belongs to the best type of poetry and a poetical image (εἰκών) often associated with the subsequent type of poetry? It takes issue with the by now generally accepted view that symbols are the opposite of the things to which they refer, whereas images are like them. It is argued that, instead, they have to do with two different kinds of knowledge and how we acquire these forms of knowledge. On the one hand, this discussion hopes to contribute to a better understanding of Proclus' theory of poetry in general. On the other, it is meant to put what has been said about symbolical poetry in a broader perspective.

The second half of this study is taken up by a commentary on Proclus' hymns. The commentary is preceded by an introduction, text, translation and a discussion of the structure of the hymn. The introduction is in the first place intended to give the reader some background information about the deities invoked. In the cases of *H.* IV and *H.* VI the identity of the gods is not obvious. This situation requires more elaborate introductions. Concerning the gods of *H.* IV it is argued that the anonymous gods are not, as was suggested by Westerink and later argued for by Saffrey, those of the Chaldaean Oracles. In the introduction to *H.* VI it is argued that this hymn is to three gods instead to two, as is generally assumed. The translation is repeated in the commentary proper: each time the verses under discussion are preceded by a translation. The translation of the whole hymn allows the reader to easily gain an overview of the hymn, whereas the pieces of translation throughout the commentary are meant to facilitate its consultation.

The commentary serves two purposes. The first is to clarify the hymns. At the most basic level this concerns the correct form of the Greek text. Next comes the interpretation. As far as philosophical matters are concerned, I have proceeded in accordance with the Neoplatonic *Homerum ex Homero* principle, i.e. I have tried to the extent possible to interpret the hymns by means of Proclus' own writings. There are three reasons for this: (1) often tracing parallels in other philosophers would create copious lemmata that are therefore difficult to handle while adding little to the understanding of Proclus' hymns; (2) parallels from other philosophical authors can be downright misleading, even when, or perhaps especially when, they are Platonists. Platonists among each other can have widely differing ideas about the same subject; (3) Since much of Proclus'

writings have been preserved, we often have little need to direct our attention elsewhere. Evident allusions to other (philosophical) texts do of course receive the attention they deserve. Here we proceed in line with the observation made in § 3 that it is important always to take Proclus' interpretation of the source-text into account. As far as non-philosophical matters are concerned, I draw from whatever texts that appear to shed light on the verses under discussion.

The second purpose of the commentary is to bring out the strong traditional overtones in Proclus' hymns. As Saffrey (1984[a]) has shown in his article on the hymn to Helios, Proclus deliberately falls back on traditional expressions in his hymn. His wish to be part of the tradition is prompted by his efforts to prove that the traditional piety that was in danger of being repressed by Christianity was not mere superstition. In fact it was justified by the metaphysical speculations of the Athenian Neoplatonists. Therefore, following Saffrey's example, we supply parallels that bring out this traditional orientation. They are preferably taken from texts that Proclus may have read like the collection of hymns that is now known as Orphic. It goes without saying that before plunging into any of these aspects, the commentary, when necessary, first tries to settle issues concerning textual criticism and construction of the Greek.

I abstain from comments on metre, since Proclus' hexameter has already been excellently and exhaustively analysed by Vogt 1957: 42-41 to which I have little to add.[11]

[11] For a comparison between Proclus' hexameter and that of Nonnus, see also Schneider 1892: 594-598. He concludes that Proclus' hexameter clearly ressembles Nonnus'.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PHILOSOPHER'S HYMN

> Ah! Sun-flower, weary of time,
> Who countest the steps of the Sun,
> Seeking after that sweet golden clime
> Where the traveller's journey is done.
>
> *William Blake, Songs of Experience 215*

1. *Introduction*

The aim of this chapter is to place Proclus' hymns in the broader perspective of the ancient hymnic tradition. First, we examine the question of what a hymn in general terms is in the ancient context. Second, we shall discuss the typical twist that Neoplatonists gave to hymns, namely that of hymns as spiritual motion. Finally, we shall see that the Athenian Neoplatonists incorporated various elements of ordinary and philosophical hymn-singing into a new concept which gave hymn-singing a place of prominence among the activities of the philosopher. This development, it will be argued, was the result of the characteristic theological orientation of the school.

2. *The characteristics of a hymn*

2.1 *Prayer and praise*

What is a ὕμνος? There are two prevalent definitions. One describes it primarily as a kind of prayer:[1]

> A hymn is a sung prayer. Prayer is the more general concept, and singing does not necessarily belong to it.

The source for this definition is an influential passage from Plato's *Laws*.[2] After lamenting the fact in the good old days the different

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[1] Bremer 1981: 193; cf. Keyßner 1932: 2; Harvey 1955: 167; Gruber/Strohm 1991: 21.

[2] In fact, Plato's definitions of various forms of poetry have been very influential

types of lyric poetry (like hymn, dirge, paean and dithyramb) were neatly distinguished from each other, whereas in his own days they have become mixed up, Plato seeks to clarify things by defining hymns as songs that are prayers to the gods (*Lg.* 700b1f.: καί τι ἦν εἶδος ᾠδῆς εὐχαὶ πρὸς θεούς, ὄνομα δὲ ὕμνοι ἐπεκαλοῦντο·).

The second definition stresses the element of praise in hymns, especially praise in honour of the gods. An example is the definition by Träger, cited with approval by Lattke in the introduction to his voluminous study of ancient hymns:

> Preislied auf einen Gott, Helden oder erhabenen Gegenstand.[3]

This definition too has an ancient pedigree. Plato already uses it in this sense when he presents Critias' tale of Atlantis as a fitting recompense for Socrates' performance of the other day and as a panegyric praising Athena as if it were a hymn (πρέπον ἂν ἡμῖν εἴη σοί τε ἀποδοῦναι χάριν καὶ τὴν θεὸν ἅμα ἐν τῇ πανηγύρει δικαίως τε καὶ ἀληθῶς οἷόνπερ ὑμνοῦντας ἐγκωμιάζειν. *Ti.* 21a1ff.). The ancient manuals on rhetoric usually describe hymns as praise of the gods as opposed to encomia that praise mortals (see e.g. Proclus *Chrestomathy*[4] *apud* Photium *Bibl.* cod. 239, 319b, Menander Rhetor 331, 19f. and Ammonius Grammaticus *Diff.* nr. 482 ed. Nickau.). This distinction between hymns and encomia is somewhat artificial. It derives from Plato *R.* 607a3ff.: the only poetry allowed in his model state are hymns to the gods and encomia to good men (μόνον ὕμνους θεοῖς καὶ ἐγκώμια τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ποιήσεως παραδεκτέον εἰς πόλιν). However, as is indicated by the text from the *Timaeus* quoted above, even Plato himself sometimes neglects this distinction.[5] However this may be, it suffices for our present purposes to conclude that hymns are associated with praise to the gods.

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both in Antiquity and in modern scholarly literature, cf. Harvey 1955: 6 who finds Plato 'an important piece of evidence' in his attempts to classify lyric poetry; Lattke 1991: 30: 'Platon und das platonische Schrifttum waren hymnologisch und musikologisch besonders einflußreich mit den vielzitierten Stellen aus den Gesetzen.'

[3] Lattke 1991: 3; cf. Harvey 1955: 165f.; Thraede 1994: 923.

[4] It is a matter of debate whether this Proclus is Proclus the Neoplatonist (as the Byzantines supposed). According to the prevalent opinion he is not. Content and style differ too much from Proclus' other works. See Lamberton 1986: 177f. n. 51. for a review of this discussion. He reaches the unorthodox conclusion that there is no reason why the *Chrestomathy* should not be attributed to Proclus, since contrasts in style are widespread in the writings of Platonists. This seems to me to be a fair point (the difference between Porphyry's *Quaestiones Homericae* and *De Antro Nympharum* being a good illustration for this phenomenon).

[5] Other instances where Plato neglects it are *Lg.* 800e1f. and 802a1; *Criti.* 108c4.

The two definitions do not necessarily exclude each other. According to the popular Greek opinion, the gods are not so different from humans. If one wishes to obtain something from them, one has to flatter them first: praying is partly rhetoric (Harvey 1955: 167).[6] Thraede 1994 explains that a hymn is a cultic song. A song of this kind more often than not praises deities. It incorporates various other cultic elements, including prayers. As a result it can be difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish hymns from prayers. The element of praise, though, seems to be prior to that of prayer. Plato's Atlantis-story is explicitly presented as a hymn in praise of Athena while it lacks the element of prayer. In the case of the so-called φυσικοὶ ὕμνοι to which we shall turn below, Menander Rhetor 337, 25f. observes that 'in these hymns there is no need for prayer at all.'

According to both definitions, a hymn is a song. In § 2.2 we shall add a qualification to this statement. All the same, many hymns are indeed metrical texts that could be sung. In a few cases the accompanying musical annotation has even been preserved.[7]

As for Proclus' hymns, they indeed fit the description of hymns as sung prayers praising the gods who are invoked. Proclus himself refers to them as hymns (*H.* II 1; III, 1; V 1; VII 5). Their metrical structure makes it at least possible that they were sung. Marinus *Vita Procli* § 19, when talking about the collection of hymns composed by Proclus, refers to the fact that Proclus celebrated festivals of all kinds of gods by means of ὑμνῳδία (hymn-singing). All hymns extol the special qualities and powers of the gods invoked (although in *H.* IV this is restricted to a few epithets). We note, however, that since Proclus is convinced that the gods cannot be affected (they are characterized by ἀπάθεια), this praise is not intended as rhetorical flattery. All hymns end in prayers.

2.2 *Speech versus song*

Up till now, hymns has been defined as sung texts. However, any text in praise of a god can by analogy be called a hymn, as the case of

[6] Race 1982 examines different aspects of rhetoric in Greek hymns that aim at pleasing the gods.

[7] An attempt to perform the hymns and other lyric texts of which the musical annotation has been preserved has been recorded by the Atrium Musicae de Madrid under the direction of Gr. Paniagua on the CD 'Musique de la Grèce Antique' (Harmonia Mundi France 1986). One must, however, be sceptical about the validity of the reconstruction.

Plato's Atlantis-story shows us. Another example from the Platonic corpus is the recantation of Socrates in the second half of the *Phaedrus* which is described as 'a mythical hymn' (μυθικόν τινα ὕμνον *Phdr.* 265c1). Menander Rhetor, in his manual, takes Plato's description of parts of his prosework as hymns literally, not just as a mode of speech. He classifies them among the φυσικοὶ ὕμνοι, which he describes as follows:

> **T. 2.1** Such hymns are found, for example, when, in delivering a hymn to Apollo, we identify him with the sun, and discuss the nature of the sun, or when we identify Hera with air or Zeus with heat. Such hymns are 'scientific'. Parmenides and Empedocles make use of this form exactly, but Plato also uses it: thus, in the *Phaedrus*, when he examines the nature of Love, what kind of passion of the soul it is, he equips him with wings. (337, 1ff.; translation Russell/Wilson 1981: 13).[8]

Menander includes both the *Phaedrus* and the *Timaeus* in this category. He was not the last to consider the whole of the *Timaeus* (not just the Atlantis-story) as a hymn on the universe.[9] His opinion is echoed not only in modern scholarly literature,[10] but also by Proclus (see § 4.2 below). As the given examples indicate, these hymns may be poems (Empedocles, Parmenides), but not necessarily so.

It should be stressed that these φυσικοὶ ὕμνοι could indeed play a role in the worship of the divine. An epigram (*IG* II^2 3816) found on the westwall of the Parthenon and dated to the time of Plutarch of Chaeronea, for example, commemorates such a hymn by a certain Platonist called Laetus:

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[8] εἰσὶ δὲ τοιοῦτοι, ὅταν Ἀπόλλωνος ὕμνον λέγοντες ἥλιον αὐτὸν εἶναι φάσκωμεν, καὶ περὶ τοῦ ἡλίου τῆς φύσεως διαλεγώμεθα, καὶ περὶ Ἥρας ὅτι ἀήρ, καὶ Ζεὺς τὸ θερμόν· οἱ γὰρ τοιοῦτοι ὕμνοι φυσιολογικοί. καὶ χρῶνται δὲ τῷ τοιούτῳ τρόπῳ Παρμενίδης τε καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς ἀκριβῶς, κέχρηται δὲ καὶ ὁ Πλάτων· ἐν τῷ Φαίδρῳ γὰρ φυσιολογῶν ὅτι πάθος ἐστὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὁ Ἔρως, ἀναπτεροποιεῖ αὐτόν.

[9] Remarkably enough, Menander claims that 'Plato in the *Critias* calls the *Timaeus* a hymn on the universe' (337, 22). As scholars (e.g. Russell/Wilson 1981: 236; Lattke 1991: 30) have not failed to notice, this is not the case. To the defence of Menander, we note that in *Ti.* 47b3ff. Timaeus asks rhetorically why we should praise (ὑμνοῖμεν) something less than the universe. Taylor 1928: 295 comments on this use of ὑμνεῖν that it means not 'hymn', 'celebrate', but 'harp on'. However, given the setting of the dialogue at the Panatheneae-festival, 'hymn' seems to me a defensible translation.

[10] See Hadot 1983: 113 n. 1 for various examples. He himself argues that 'ce jeu sacré est une offerande poétique au Poète de l'Universe', 'comme hymne de fête sacrée' (p. 129f.); see also Runia 1992 who interprets the extensive use of the superlative in the *Timaeus* as hymnic language.

T. 2.2 Having heard the sublime hymn of the theologian Laetus,
I saw heaven opening itself for humans.
If, as Pythagoras says, a soul reincarnates,
then it is in you, Laetus, that Plato, appearing again, lives.[11]

Bowersock 1982: 276 identifies the hymn of Laetus as an example of the φυσικοὶ ὕμνοι described by Menander. A hymn by a theologian is apparently about the divine. Bowersock argues that this must be the supreme god. He explains that for a Platonist the supreme god was beyond the heights of heaven, and that in order to evoke it, the speaker would have, quite literally, to imagine the opening of heaven and the divinity beyond it.[12] The hymn was sublime in the sense that it was about the highest realm of the cosmos, heaven, and what lay beyond: a hymn περὶ μεταρσίων. Bowersock's interpretation calls to mind the above-mentioned interpretation of the *Timaeus* as a hymn on the universe which deals with the cosmos and the heavenly realm. Whether this hymn was a work in prose or in verse cannot be determined with certainty. However, given the revival of versified philosophy at the time, Bowersock (*o.c.* p. 279) believes that it is likely that this hymn reflected that new fashion.

We should note that Laetus is introduced here as a θειολόγος. It was precisely the task of theologians to deliver a kind of sermon on the god who was being worshipped (Nilsson 1961²: 380f.). These sermons were considered as hymns, if not necessarily ones that were φυσικοί. Examples are some speeches, so-called *manteutoi*, by Aristides Rhetor (*orationes* 37-46 ed. Keil)[13] and the speech by the Neoplatonist emperor Julian in honour of King Helios (XI [IV]) on the occasion of festival of *Solis Agon*.[14] As Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* I

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[11] Θειολόγου Λαίτοιο μετάρσιον ὕμνον ἀκούσας | οὐρανὸν ἀνθρώποις εἶδον ἀνοιγόμενον·| εἰ κατὰ Πυθαγόρην ψυχὴ μεταβαίνει ἐς ἄλλον, | ἐν σοί, Λαῖτε, Πλάτων ζῇ πάλι φαινόμενος.

[12] I fail to see why the hymn has necessarily to be about the supreme god only and not about the gods in general, as opposed to daemons, angels and the like.

[13] Cf. Nilsson 1961²: 380; Lattke 1991: 48-54 who, however, denies that these are (prose)hymns (p. 53). However, as Lattke himself notes, Aristides describes his speeches as hymns, see e.g. XXXVII 1, 5 (ed. Keil): this speech for Athena will be a mixture of hymn and prayer (μικτὸς εὐχῆς τε καὶ ὕμνος); XLV 34, 11: this speech to Serapis has been a hymn (ὕμνος). Lattke's argument is a formal one, but, as Aristides in XL 1,1 observes, hymns may take many forms: Heracles is much hymned (πολυύμνητος): some honour him in prose, other in verse and everybody daily, when exclaiming 'O Heracles!'.

[14] On this 'hymn' cf. Lattke 1991: 62, who once again denies that this speech is a hymn. Note, however, that Julian himself calls it a hymn (c. 3, 131d: ὑμνήσωμεν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἑορτήν). The speech that discusses the nature of the Mother of the Gods (VIII [V]) ends in a prosehymn (20, 179d-180c).

1968: LXXII n. 2 observe, Proclus, the author of the *Theologia Platonica*, places Plato's *Parmenides* in this tradition when he calls its first hypothesis a 'theological hymn by means of negations to the One' (*In Parm.* VII 1191, 34f.: ὕμνον διὰ τῶν ἀποφάσεων θεολογικὸν εἰς τὸ ἕν). We will return to this hymn below (§ 4.2)

3. *Hymns as spiritual motion*

3.1 *Neoplatonic worship of the divine*

The Ancients in general worshipped the gods in the belief that divinities, if they felt neglected, could cause a lot of harm, whereas worship in the form of offerings, hymns and the like could put them in a favourable mood. The gods were as obsessed with honour as the Homeric heroes, but, because of their formidable powers, the effects of their rage were far more destructive. Philosophers, from the Presocratics onwards, were strongly opposed to this (in their opinion) blasphemous portrayal of the divine. They imagined the gods as transcendent beings, free from the petty human emotions like envy and pride. They could not be moved by gifts and flattery, nor did they need the greasy smoke from burning altars. All the same, the worship of the gods was considered to be an honourable thing. Not because the divine needs it, but because their majesty inspires us to do so. Porphyry *Marc.* 18 calls it for exactly this reason the greatest fruit of piety to honour god in accordance with the ancestral traditions. These considerations led the Neoplatonists to reflect upon and reinterpret the meaning and function of worship.

The Neoplatonists redefined the essence of worship in accordance with the goal of their ethics: becoming like god as far as possible (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν; Plato *R.* 613b1; *Ti.* 90d; *Tht.* 176b-c). Porphyry *Abst.* II 34, 2-4 admonishes us that we should not try to honour the highest god with anything sensible, either burnt offerings or words. 'We should bring our own elevation as a holy offer to god by uniting ourselves with him, by becoming like him. This offer is both our hymn and our salvation.'[15] Lower gods, Porphyry adds, can be honoured with hymns that consist of words (τὴν ἐκ τοῦ λόγου ὑμνῳδίαν). Proclus expresses him likewise in *Chal. Phil.* Fr. 2: Our

[15] δεῖ ἄρα συναφθέντας καὶ ὁμοιωθέντας αὐτῷ τὴν αὐτῶν ἀναγωγὴν θυσίαν ἱερὰν προσάγειν τῷ θεῷ, τὴν αὐτὴν δὲ καὶ ὕμνον οὖσαν καὶ ἡμῶν σωτηρίαν.

hymn to the Father (ὕμνος τοῦ Πατρός) does not consist in words, nor in rites, but in becoming like him (τὴν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐξομοίωσιν).

This striking resemblance between Proclus and Porphyry on the worship of the highest god ends where the question of how to reach this assimilation to the divine comes into play. As we shall see in chapter IV, Proclus, following Iamblichus but contrary to Porphyry, puts his trust in theurgy in order to become like god. Leaving the matter of theurgy aside for the moment, we will now concentrate on the relation between worship of the divine, the process of becoming godlike, and the role of hymns.

3.2 *Hymns as epistrophe*

Becoming like the divine consists in the process of ascent of the human soul to its divine origin. Proclus views this ascent in the context of his circular theory of causation. He explains the working of the cyclic process with great clarity in the *Elements of Theology*. First there is the cause of a product. The product 'both remains in the producing cause and proceeds from it' (*El.* § 30, p. 35, 12-13). For, if the product would wholly proceed from its cause, it would have nothing in common with it anymore, and therefore lose all likeness to its cause. However, procession is accomplished by means of likeness (*El.* § 29). What comes down, must go up: everything inevitably desires the Good. This can only be attained through the mediation of its proximate cause. Therefore its proximate cause is the primary object of its desire. Therefore it is the primary object of its reversion, its ἐπιστροφή (*El.* § 31). As a result of this, causation has a triple structure: 'every effect remains in its cause (μένειν), proceeds from it (προϊέναι), and reverts upon it (ἐπιστρέφειν)' (*El.* § 35, p. 38, 9-10).[16] We note that, although in the final instance everything desires the ultimate Good (i.e. the highest god), we ascend only gradually by reverting initially upon our proximate cause. In Proclus' thought these proximate causes are minor deities that in their turn are the products of major deities, so that through the former we ascend to the latter. These series of gods are the famous Neoplatonic σειραί.[17]

For Proclus, this movement of *epistrophe* is the only proper form of worship of the divine. According to *In Tim.* I 43, 28-44, 19, humans

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[16] Cf. Dodds 1963: 213f. For an extended discussion of causation and the cyclic movement in Proclus, see Gersh 1973, esp. pp. 49ff.

[17] This theme will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

should repay services to each other. In the case of the numerous goods that the gods lavish on us, however, there is little to repay them with, for the divine is self-sufficient. Although it does not need it, it does wish that we show our gratitude by reverting upon it (*In Tim.* I 44, 15f. ἐπιστρέφομεν). Not because the gods out of vanity want to hear our thank-yous, but because being good, their wish is that we too participate in the good. It is precisely through reverting to the gods that we are filled with the greatest goods that save us.

Proclus, who like Porphyry above, wished to honour the divine 'in accordance with the ancestral traditions,' reinterprets the singing of hymns as an *epistrophe* to the gods. We have already seen this above (§ 3.1) in the case of the wordless hymn to the Father. Since everything reverts upon its proximate cause, hymns are sung by all beings, whether god, man, or plant. To start with plants, in a passage — that most probably inspired William Blake's poem *Ah! Sun-flower*[18] — we read:

> **T. 2.3** Or why do heliotropes move together with the sun and the moonplants with the moon, accompanying the lights of the cosmos in as far as possible? Because, since everything prays according to its own order and celebrates in hymns the leaders of the whole series noerically or with words or physically or perceptibly, the heliotrope too moves to the extent that it is flexible. And if someone would be capable of hearing it hitting the air as it turns around, he would observe that by means of this sound it renders to the King a kind of hymn, that a plant is capable of singing.[19] (*De Sacrificio* 148, 10ff.; for a discussion of *De Sacrificio* , see chapter IV § 4.4)

Not being much of a botanist myself, I will not try to determine which plant is meant here (if any in particular). The basic idea is clear: everything turns towards the leaders of its causative chain (its proximate cause) as best it can in a hymn or prayer (we note that hymn and prayer are here once again employed more or less as synonyms, cf. § 2.1). In the case of these plants, their hymns consist in producing a sound by beating the air while they move around. The god of

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[18] Part of the poem has been quoted at the heading of this chapter. On the relation between the poem and Proclus, see Harper: 1961: 119f.

[19] Ἢ πόθεν ἡλιοτρόπια μὲν ἡλίῳ, σεληνοτρόπια δὲ σελήνῃ συγκινεῖται συμπεριπολοῦντα ἐς δύναμιν τοῖς τοῦ κόσμου φωστῆρσιν; Εὔχεται γὰρ πάντα κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν τάξιν καὶ ὑμνεῖ τοὺς ἡγεμόνας τῶν σειρῶν ὅλων ἢ νοερῶς ἢ λογικῶς ἢ φυσικῶς ἢ αἰσθητῶς· ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ ἡλιοτρόπιον ᾧ ἔστιν εὔλυτον, τούτῳ κινεῖται καί, εἰ δή τις αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν περιστροφὴν ἀκούειν τὸν ἀέρα πλήσσοντος οἷός τε ἦν, ὕμνον ἄν τινα διὰ τοῦ ἤχου τούτου συνῄσθετο τῷ Βασιλεῖ προσάγοντος, ὃν δύναται φυτὸν ὑμνεῖν.

the series of the heliotrope is of course the sun, King Helios. He is the cause of everything that lives on this earth. As Proclus states in his hymn to Helios, he 'holds the key to the source of life' (*H.* I 2-3). Other plants may sing their hymns in another way, like the lotus, who opens its flower at sunrise and closes it when the sun goes down: 'What difference there is between people who sing a hymn to the sun (ὑμνεῖν τὸν ἥλιον) while opening and closing their mouth or lips and the lotus which opens and closes its leaves?' (*De Sacrificio* 149, 12ff.). These floral hymns are examples of the physical hymn (149, 18 ὁ ὕμνος φυσικός) mentioned in **T. 2.3**.[20]

The Moirai provide an example of hymning in a noeric way. According to Plato *R.* 617c3 (ὑμνεῖν), they sing, accompanying the Siren's song, with Lachesis singing of the past, Clotho of the present, and Atropos of the future (the temporal hymns referred to in **T. 2.4** below). Proclus interprets this as a reversion upon their Mother (Necessity):

> **T. 2.4** And if you wish, examine[21] the exegesis of the temporal hymns in another way. For the act of singing hymns itself as such makes it clear that their noeric activity is turned towards their superior causes, since hymns are sung about superior gods, not about those who are inferior. It is clear, then, that they reflect intellectually on the causes of all things in their mother and that they are truly the singers of hymns in honour of their mother.[22] (*In RP.* II 250, 21-28).

The hymns of the Moirai are here interpreted as a kind of philosophical reflection upon transcendental causes. It is a noeric activity, hence we may assume that these are an example of noeric hymns. This reflection entails a reversion, for it is 'turned (ἐπεστραμμένην) towards their superior causes.' Note the explanation for this: hymns are always about superior beings, never about inferior ones. This is consistent with the idea that hymns consist in a movement of *epistrophe* towards a causative principle, which, by its very nature, can of course never be to something inferior to the one that sings the hymn.

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[20] This ὕμνος φυσικός is of course different from the one discussed in § 2.2.

[21] Reading with Festugière trans. *In RP.* v. III 1970: 208 n. 1 σκόπει, instead of ⟨δυνατὸν⟩ σκοπεῖν ed. Kroll.

[22] εἰ δὲ βούλει, καὶ καθ' ἕτερον τρόπον σκόπει τῶν χρονικῶν ὕμνων τὴν ἐξήγησιν. αὐτὸ μὲν γὰρ ὅλως τὸ ὑμνεῖν δηλοῖ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτῶν εἶναι τὴν νοερὰν εἰς τὰς ὑπερτέρας αἰτίας ἐπεστραμμένην· αἱ γὰρ ὑμνήσεις τῶν θεῶν κρειττόνων εἰσίν, ἀλλ' οὐ χειρόνων. δῆλον οὖν ὅτι νοοῦσιν τὰς ἐν τῇ μητρὶ τῶν πάντων αἰτίας καὶ εἰσὶν ὄντως ὑμνῳδοὶ τῆς μητρός.

As far as Proclus' own hymns are concerned, it has been observed more than once that their main theme is that of the ascent (ἀναγωγή) and hence the reversion of the soul towards the intelligible world.[23] In *H.* I 34 Helios is invoked in his function of ἀναγωγεὺς ψυχῶν, in *H.* II Aphrodite is invoked as the mistress of the Erotes who cause the ἀναγώγια κέντρα (II 5) with their arrows. In *H.* III 1 an appeal is made to the Muses as the ἀναγώγιον φῶς. The gods of *H.* IV 2 are said to kindle the human souls with ἀναγώγιον πῦρ. Even though the term ἀναγωγή does not appear in the other hymns *expresso verbo,* what it refers to still remains the central theme of the hymns. In *H.* V 14 the local Lycian Aphrodite is asked to lift Proclus' soul to the very beautiful (ψυχὴν δ' ἂψ ἀνάειρον ἀπ' αἴσχεος ἐς πολὺ κάλλος). The gods of *H.* VI are asked to lead him towards the harbour of piety (vs. 12). In *H.* VII 35-36, finally, he prays to Athena to draw him up to Olympus. All are descriptions of the divine world to which Proclus longs to go. In chapter III we shall discuss this movement of *epistrophe* in more detail.

4. *Philosophy as hymn-singing*

4.1 *The philosopher-poet*

We have seen in § 2.2 that Menander Rhetor, following Plato's lead, considered the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedrus* as 'scientific' hymns. The case of the theologian Laetus shows that these 'scientific' hymns might even have a cultic function. Proclus too connects doing philosophy with singing hymns. It will appear that these hymns, in accordance with the theory outlined in § 3.2, are presented as a form of *epistrophe* and that there is a cultic dimension to them.

Apart from the texts from the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedrus,* it was especially the *Phaedo* that helped to shape the idea that philosophy is a sort of hymn-singing. According to *Phd.* 61a3ff., philosophy is the greatest of the musical arts. Proclus *In RP.* I 57, 11-16 comments:

> **T. 2.5** By means of this art the soul is able to honour all things human and to sing hymns to the gods in a perfect way, while imitating the Leader of the Muses himself, who hymns his Father with noeric songs and keeps the cosmos together with indissoluble fetters while moving everything together, as Socrates says in the *Cratylus.*[24]

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[23] See e.g. Meunier 1935: 56 n. 1; Beierwaltes 1965: 291.

[24] ... δι' ἣν ἡ ψυχὴ τά τε ἀνθρώπινα πάντα δυνατὸν κοσμεῖν καὶ τὰ θεῖα τελέως

The Leader of the Muses is Apollo. He keeps the cosmos together because he is the source of cosmic harmony (cf. commentary to *H.* I 19-20). What interests us here is the fact that mankind hymns the gods in imitation of Apollo's noeric hymns in honour of the Father. Apollo's father is not the one found in the wordless hymns sung by the ascending soul from *Chal. Phil.* Fr. 2 which we discussed in § 3.1, for that Father is some cryptic supreme deity that surpasses Apollo by far and could for that reason never be his father. He is Zeus. Zeus is not just the father of Apollo, he is also the Demiurge, the Maker and Father of this universe. As we shall see in the next chapter, the Demiurge plays an important role at the background in Proclus' seven 'real' hymns. For the moment it suffices that human philosophy is an imitation of Apollo's hymns.[25] Proclus took this idea seriously. This appears for example from the ingenious way in which he tries to turn the *Parmenides* into a hymn by analogy with the *Timaeus*, as well as from his peculiar use of the verb to hymn. We shall now discuss these two phenomena.

4.2 *The* Timaeus *and the* Parmenides *as hymns*

Proclus interprets Critias' hymn to Athena (the Atlantis-story) in the *Timaeus* as an imitation of the contemplation of a deity of a reality even higher than itself (cf. also **T. 2.4** on the hymns of the Moirai). Socrates (according to Proclus' interpretation) accepts Critias' proposal (*Tim.* 26c5 ff.) to give a full account of the war between Athens and Atlantis as a sort of hymn, because this warfare is an image of the war between the intelligible Demiurge and matter (the topic of Timaeus' subsequent discussion of the creation of the cosmos). He then adds:

> **T. 2.6** … because as a hymn to Athena it is a contribution to the festival (sc. of the Panathenaea). For if mankind is in any way to benefit from its voice, it has to be used to sing hymns. And generally speaking, because the goddess is the cause of contemplation and activity, we imitate her practical activity by means of the festival and her contemplative activity by means of the hymn (*In Tim.* I 197, 5-10).[26]

ὑμνῳδεῖν, αὐτὸν μιμουμένη τὸν μουσηγέτην, ὃς ὑμνεῖ μὲν τὸν πατέρα ταῖς νοεραῖς ᾠδαῖς, συνέχει δὲ τὸν ὅλον κόσμον τοῖς ἀλύτοις δεσμοῖς ὁμοπολῶν πάντα, καθάπερ ὁ ἐν τῷ Κρατύλῳ λέγει Σωκράτης.

[25] For Apollo as a philosophical deity who draws the human soul upwards to divine Truth by means of philosophy, see chapter III § 5.1.

[26] …καὶ ὡς ὕμνον τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς τῇ θυσίᾳ πρόσφορον· εἰ γάρ τι φωνῆς ὄφελος ἀνθρώποις, εἰς ὕμνους αὐτῇ χρηστέον. καὶ ἄλλως ἐπειδὴ θεωρίας καὶ πράξεως ἡ θεὸς

Athena, the patroness of philosophy, is the cause of contemplation. Our worship consists in imitating this divine action by singing hymns like the one of Critias, i.e. by doing philosophy. The explicit connection with the Panathenaea-festival is noteworthy. Although Plato *Ti.* 21a presents the story as a hymn on the occasion of the festival, Proclus connects hymn and festival even closer by interpreting them both as human imitations of divine actions.

Imitation of Athena implies that one focuses on Athena, i.e. that one reverts upon her. Proclus comments that Critias (*Ti.* 21a2) considers it 'just' (δικαίως) to offer the Atlantis-story as a hymn to Athena precisely for this reason:

> **T. 2.7** (The story) is offered to the goddess as a 'just' and 'true' hymn. 'Just', because everything that has proceeded needs to return to its own principle (*In Tim.* I 85, 16-18).[27]

We note that the hymn is described in terms of the cyclic process of causation (see § 3.2): it is the τὸ προελθόν (προίεναι) that reverts (ἐπιστρέφειν).

Let us now turn to the *Parmenides.* We have already seen (§ 2.2) that Proclus considers its first hypothesis as a theological hymn.[28] Elsewhere (*Theol. Plat.* I 7, p. 31, 25-27)[29] the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* too is considered as a hymn celebrating the generation of all the gods, a real theogony.[30] Why did Proclus interpret (parts of) the *Parmenides* as a hymn? Unlike in the case of the *Timaeus*, Plato himself had not given any lead for doing so. To my mind, this has to do with the specific interpretation of the second hypothesis as developed by Proclus' master Syrianus. It was the latter who first put forward the idea that the second hypothesis in fact contains the complete hierarchy of all gods, depending on the One which was

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αἰτία, διὰ μὲν τῆς θυσίας μιμούμεθα τὴν πρακτικὴν αὐτῆς ἐνέργειαν, διὰ δὲ τοῦ ὕμνου τὴν θεωρητικήν.

27 καὶ ὕμνος ἀποδίδοται τῇ θεῷ δίκαιος καὶ ἀληθής· Δίκαιος μέν, ὅτι δεῖ πᾶν τὸ προελθὸν εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν ἐπιστρέφειν ἀρχήν, …

28 Cf. *Theol. Plat.* III 23, p. 83, 22ff.: 'The very first and imparticipable One … is being hymned (ὕμνηται) in the first hypothesis (sc. of the *Parmenides*).'

29 καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἢ θεῶν γένεσις ὑμνημένη καὶ τῶν ὁπωσοῦν ὄντων ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρρήτου καὶ ἀγνώστου τῶν ὅλων αἰτίας. Cf. Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* vol. I 1968: 140 additional n. 2 to p. 31.

30 On Proclus' interpretation of the second hypothesis as a theogony, see Saffrey 1992[a]: 44. In passing, we observe that Proclus in his turn opens his commentary on the *Parmenides* with a prayer — something, if not a hymn, very similar to it, see § 2.1 — to all divine classes in descending order. This structure clearly derives from Proclus' interpretation of the second hypothesis as a theogony (cf. Saffrey 1994: 15). Thus one reversion upon the gods prompts another.

celebrated in the first hypothesis.[31] It now became possible to see a parallel between the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*:

> **T. 2.8** Hence Timaeus traces all thing back to the Demiurge, Parmenides traces them to the One, and there is an analogous relation between the Demiurge and the contents of the cosmos, and the One and all things whatsoever (*In Parm.* I 642, 20-24; trans. Morrow/Dillon 1987: 37).

Proclus then observes that both dialogues have a similar dramatic setting:

> **T. 2.9** As there is this analogy between the dialogues in respect of their purposes, so they agree in the temporal settings of the actions they portray. One presupposes the Lesser Panathenaea, the other the Greater (cf. *Parm.* 127a8), as I said before (*In Parm.* I 643, 5-10; trans. Morrow/Dillon 1987: 37).

'As I said before' refers here in first instance to *In Parm.* I 618, 24ff. However, analogy is also observed in *In Tim.* I 84, 22ff., an indication that it derives perhaps from Syrianus himself.[32] Although Proclus does not explicitly say so, it seems justified to conclude from the preceding discussion that Proclus interpreted the *Parmenides* as a hymn to the One and all the gods on the occasion of the Great Panathenaea. For this hypothesis we may have some further evidence. The anonymous *Prolegomena to the Philosophy of Plato* — probably the work of a successor of Olympiodorus active in the second half of the sixth century CE[33] — says about the time of publication of the Plato's dialogues:

> **T. 2.10** As for the time when he (sc. Plato) published his dialogues, this was not left to chance, but he chose holy days and festivals of the gods for his works to be offered up as hymns and made known to the public, for it is on festivals that hymns are traditionally sung. Thus he published the *Timaeus* at the Bendidia (a feast in honour of Artemis in the Piraeus), the *Parmenides* at the Panathenaea, and others at other festivals. So much for the time (*Prolegomena* 16, 43-50; trans. Westerink 1962: 33).[34]

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[31] On Syrianus' revolutionary interpretation of the *Parmenides*, see Saffrey 1984[b] and Saffrey 1992[a]: 44.

[32] The commentary on the *Timaeus* is a work of Proclus' youth, mainly based on the courses of Syrianus (Marinus *Vita Procli* § 13).

[33] Westerink 1962: L; Westerink/Trouillard *et al.* 1990: LXXXIX.

[34] Ἐν χρόνῳ δὲ τοὺς διαλόγους ἐξέδωκεν οὐ τῷ τυχόντι, ἀλλ' ἐν ᾧ πανηγύρεις ἦσαν καὶ ἑορταὶ τῶν θεῶν, ἵνα τότε καθάπερ ὕμνοι ἀνυμνῶνται καὶ κηρύττωνται τὰ συγγράμματα αὐτοῦ, ἐν γὰρ ταῖς ἑορταῖς εἰωθαμεν τοὺς ὕμνους λέγειν. ἀμέλει γοῦν Τίμαιον μὲν ἐν τοῖς Βενδιδίοις (ἑορτὴ δ' αὕτη τίς ἐστιν τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος ἐν τῷ

One would like to know the festivals and holy days at which the other dialogues were supposed to have been published. Since the anonymous restricts himself to the two examples discussed by Proclus. We may therefore, I assume, regard him as the source.[35]

4.3 *The technical use of ὑμνεῖν*

Any reader of, say, Proclus' commentary on the *Timaeus* will not fail to notice the abundant use of the verb ὑμνεῖν and its derivatives.[36] Very often it seems to be used in the sense of 'say', 'uphold'. To give an example: 'For Numenius, who has mentioned (ἀνυμνήσας) three gods, calls (καλεῖ) the first the father, the second the creator, and the third the creation' (*In Tim.* I 303, 27). Festugière[37] observes that this is a case in which ὑμνεῖν has lost any overtones of celebration or solemnity. At the same time, he points out that in other cases, this nuance is maintained. To my mind, however, ὑμνεῖν never entirely loses a special sense of celebration, as can be learnt from an analysis of its occurrences. My claim is that the members of the Athenian Academy used it on purpose, because they were convinced that by doing philosophy, or rather metaphysics, they were as it were singing hymns to the gods.

The subject who does the 'hymning' in the sense just described cannot be just any philosopher. He belongs without exception either to sources of wisdom which Proclus had incorporated in the Platonic tradition (e.g. Homer, Orpheus, Pythagoras) or to Platonic philosophers (e.g. Socrates, Plato, Iamblichus, Theodorus, Numenius). There is, e.g., no instance of Aristotle who 'hymns'. The reason for this cannot be that Aristotle does not figure prominently in Proclus' writings, for there are over one hundred references to the Stagirite. Furthermore, not anything can be the object of 'hymning'. These are predominantly metaphysical entities (the One, Nous, Soul, etc.) or traditional gods interpreted that way (Zeus, Athena, Dionysios,

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Πειραιεῖ), Παρμενίδην δ' ἐν τοῖς Παναθηναίοις ἐξέδωκεν, καὶ ἄλλον ἐν ἄλλῃ ἑορτῇ. τοσαῦτα καὶ περὶ τοῦ χρόνου.

[35] We note that Proclus *In RP.* I 18, 7-19, 23 clearly distinguishes between the Bendidia and the Lesser Panathenea. Hence, according to Proclus the *Timaeus* was *not* published at the occasion of the Bendidia.

[36] In the whole Proclean corpus the following words (in order of frequency) occur a near three hundred times: ὑμνεῖν, ἀνυμνεῖν, ὕμνος, ἐξυμνεῖν, πολυυμνήτος, ὕμνησις, ὑμνῳδία, ὑμνῳδός, προεξυμνεῖν.

[37] Festugière trans. *In Tim.* vol. II 1967: 157 n. 3; 164 n. 2.

Hephaistos etc.). A small minority of the objects of hymning are philosophical ways of investigation (dialectics, diairesis).

The distribution of ὑμνέω and related forms in Proclus' oeuvre squares with the suggestion that for him metaphysical discussions are as it were hymns to the gods. Such verbs are virtually absent from works that do not primarily deal with metaphysics. It is absent from the bulky commentary on Euclides, with the exception of *In Euclid.* 211, 27: Plato extols (ἐξύμνησεν) the diairesis as a help in all branches of knowledge. It is rare in works that deal (predominantly) with ethics: it appears just five times in the commentary on the *Alcibiades*. In the case of the three treatises *De Providentia*, *De Malorum Subsistentia* and *Decem Dubitationes* we are somewhat hampered by the fact that we lack large portions of the Greek text. However, the word-for-word Latin translation by William of Moerbeke shows that it cannot have occurred often in the original. As for the remaining Greek text we have three instances.[38] On the other hand, it occurs *passim* in the works that have — at least to Proclus' mind — a metaphysical orientation: the commentaries on the *Timaeus* (75 times), the *Republic* (45 times), the *Parmenides* (28 times), and the *Cratylus* (22 times). It is strikingly absent from the *Elements of Theology*. The main reason for this is that the systematic organisation of the work has no use for the appeals to authority which characterize most of Proclus' works.[39] Thus we lack the structure 'X says/hymns that Y'. For the same reason, the score in the *Commentary on the Parmenides*, though the most metaphysical of all of Proclus' writings, is rather low. Contrary to the *Commentary on the Republic*, and especially that on the *Timaeus*, it makes noticeably less appeals to authority.

To conclude then, even when 'hymn' is used in a seemingly flat sense of merely 'saying, noticing that', it never entirely loses its nuance of celebration, i.e. the celebration of the divine by the Platonic philosopher who reverts upon it through the study of philosophy.

4.4 *Philosophy as hymn-singing: a characteristic of the Athenian Academy*

The idea that doing philosophy is singing hymns to the gods was a peculiarity of the Athenian Academy. Admittedly, we find in previous

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38 *Decem Dub.* 51, 35 (ὑμνῳδός/laudator); *Decem Dub.* 62, 3 (πολυύμνητος/valde laudatus); *De Providentia* 22, 15f. (ὑμνοῦντες /laudantes).

39 As observes Dodds 1963^2: xi.

Platonists the idea that the philosopher should celebrate the divine with hymns. Plotinus II 9 [33] 9, 33 admonishes us to hymn (ὑμνεῖν) the intelligible gods and the king of the intelligible world.[40] As an example of what he has in mind, we may perhaps think of *Enn.* V 1 [10] 2, 1-27, which we can read as a hymn to the World Soul.[41] We have already seen that for Porphyry the ultimate hymn to god is to become like him (§ 3.1).[42] Iamblichus *Protrepticus* c. 14, p. 104, 2 maintains that the non-philosopher, contrary to the philosopher, is incapable of hymning the true life of gods and blessed men in the right way. However, these are just isolated passages. It cannot be compared to the consistent use of verbs like ὑμνεῖν to describe what a Platonic philosopher is doing when he discusses higher realities. The first to do so, at least as far as we can trace it, is Proclus' teacher Syrianus in his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Not withstanding the fact that it is a commentary on Aristotle, we find only 'Platonic' philosophers who make hymnic utterances like Platonists (60, 3), Pythagoreans (140, 17; 142, 21; 143, 15) and theologians (89, 15) on elevated subjects like the One (60, 30). It is used in a comparable manner by the last of the Athenian Neoplatonists, Damascius. Furthermore, we have seen (§ 4.2) that the interpretation of the *Parmenides* as a hymn for the occasion of the Greater Panathenaea mirroring the *Timaeus* as a hymn for the Lesser Panathenaea, was a novelty of the Athenian Academy, be it by Syrianus or Proclus.

As will be remembered, the representation of the *Parmenides* as a hymn derives from Syrianus' revolutionary interpretation of the second hypothesis as a theogony. It is here that we touch upon the explanation why the Athenian Neoplatonists elaborated so much upon the idea, present in Plato only in germ, that philosophy was in a way a hymn in praise of the gods. In the Athenian school, the prime object of the study of philosophy had become to study the nature of the divine, and especially to establish its hierarchy, i.e. to fabricate philosophical theogonies. Proclus' *Theologia Platonica* is, of course,

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[40] It is telling for the difference between Plotinus and Proclus that this is the only time that ὑμνεῖν appears in Plotinus.

[41] Phillips 1983 lists and discusses the various hymnic elements in this passage.

[42] Porphyry ascribes this idea to 'a certain wise man', probably the thaumaturg Apollonius Tyanensis (see Bouffartigue/Patillon 1979: 30-34 in their edition of *Abst.* vol. 2). We find something comparable in the writings of his older contemporary, Philo of Alexandria, see e.g. *De spec. leg.* I 272. For Philo, see further Scholer 1991: 70-71.

the best example of this. The philosophical theologian, like his predecessor Laetus (**T. 2.2**), is a servant of the gods who celebrates their mysteries. The prooemium of the *Theologia Platonica* (*Theol. Plat.* I 1, pp. 5, 6-8, 15) presents the Platonic tradition exactly in this way: as a sort of Eleusinian mysteries. Plato had been the hierophant (*Theol. Plat.* I 1, p. 6, 7; note that the ἱεροφάντης was the high priest of the Eleusinian mysteries); later Platonists like Plotinus, Amelius, Porphyrius, Iamblichus, and Theodore of Asine had later been sent by the gods to explain the Platonic revelations. Proclus' teacher, Syrianus, had in his turn, initiated Proclus into these mysteries and had made him a member of the choir that sings the mysterious truth of the divine.'[43] It is the irony of fate that just when Neoplatonism was becoming more and more theological, the more hostile society was growing towards paganism. Worship in the traditional public form became ever more problematic. This development forced the religious Athenian Neoplatonists to take their resort to philosophy as a way of honouring the divine even more.

H. D. Saffrey has drawn our attention to this development of philosophy into what he calls 'scientific theology' in numerous publications. It is perhaps best summarized in his own words:

> Avec Syrianus et Proclus, la recherche de la nature du divin et de la hiérarchie des dieux est devenue l'object presqu' exclusif de la philosophie. Et comme, en Grèce, la philosophie n'a jamais été seulement une activité intellectuelle, mais aussi un style de vie, la vie spirituelle de ces philosophes est devenue une prière et une liturgie continuelles. Alors que les empereurs chrétiens interdisent le culte des dieux païens, font fermer les temples et enlever les statues de culte pour les transformer en object de décoration dans leurs palais et leurs jardins, la prière et la liturgie païennes sont devenues une prière intérieure et une liturgie domestique, mieux encore l'activité philosophique elle-même, par son objet propre, est un culte rendu aux dieux.[44]

4.5 *Proclus' hymns in the religious context of the Athenian Academy*

Proclus' 'real' hymns are best understood in the religious context of the Athenian Neoplatonic movement, in which the philosopher is at the same time a priest. A remark by Marinus *Vita Procli* § 19 is

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43 *Theol. Plat.* I 1, p. 7, 7f. : καὶ δὴ καὶ τῆς περὶ τῶν θείων μυστικῆς ἀληθείας συγχορευτὰς ἀπέφηνε.

44 Saffrey 1996: 217, cf. Saffrey 1976 esp. p. 207; Saffrey 1984[b] esp. p. 9; Saffrey 1984[c]: 169f.; Saffrey 1992[a]: 45f.

illuminating in this respect. He tells us that Proclus celebrated the important holidays of all peoples and of every nations by hymn-singing and the like. As proof he adduces Proclus' collection of hymns (ἡ τῶν ὕμνων αὐτοῦ πραγματεία) which contained (now lost) hymns to all kinds of exotic deities. For as Proclus used to say, Marinus explains, it befits the *philosopher* (φιλόσοφος) not to observe the rites of any one city or only a few, but to be the *hierophant* of the whole world together (κοινῇ τοῦ ὅλου κόσμου ἱεροφάντης).

What does Proclus mean when he considers himself as the hierophant as the whole world because he is a philosopher? As we have seen above (§ 4.4), Proclus compares Plato to a hierophant. In the Eleusinian mysteries, the hierophant showed and explained to the initiates the holy secrets of the mysteries. In the same manner, Plato had revealed the mysteries of Platonic philosophy to the world. Syrianus is likewise an hierophant because he has explained the mysteries of the *Parmenides* to Proclus (*In Parm.* I 618, 23ff.). Now, one of the central convictions of the Athenian Neoplatonists was that the theological traditions of all peoples somehow expressed the same universal truths about the divine. One of the prime aims of their researches into the nature of the divine was to show that the theological systems of for example the Chaldaeans, Orpheus, and Homer were in harmony with each other and Plato's philosophy.[45] It is for this reason that the later Neoplatonists took an interest in all kinds of local cults. According to Marinus *Vita Procli* § 15, Proclus was once forced to leave Athens for a while and spent his time travelling through Asia. There he studied and participated in local rites while clarifying them to his hosts, who probably had no idea that their rites and beliefs were expressions of a Neoplatonic metaphysical system. It is in this way that Proclus the philosopher must have considered himself as the hierophant of the whole world.

Proclus was not the only one to do so. About Isidore, Damascius' mentor who succeeded Marinus as head of the Athenian Academy, we know that he composed hymns that showed loftiness of spirit but were found to fall short as far as versification was concerned. What is more they had some ritual function, for Damascius describes them as having an element of τελεσιουργόν, whatever that may mean exactly (Damscius *Vita Isid.* Epitoma Photiana 61 p. 90). Even more

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[45] This point has been stressed by Saffrey, see esp. Saffrey 1992[a], cf. Saffrey 1996: 215f.

interestingly, the Egyptian Neoplatonist Asclepiades, a contemporary of Damascius,[46] wrote a treatise on the agreement of all theologies, including this time the one of the Egyptians, while he composed hymns to the Egyptian gods (Damascius *Vita Isid.* Fr. 164 p. 137 τῶν ὕμνων, ὧν συγγέγραφεν εἰς τοὺς Αἰγυπτίων θεούς). Unfortunately none of these hymns has survived.

5. *Synesius' hymns*

It will have been observed that up till now Synesius' hymns have been left out of the discussion. Nine hymns by his hand have come down to us, directed to God, Jesus, or the divine Trinity.[47] The reason for this omission is that to my mind there are considerable differences between the philosophical outlook of Proclus and Synesius. So considerable in fact that they overshadow the similarities, as we shall now see.

Synesius of Cyrene received his philosophical education in Alexandria from the ill-fated Hypatia who adhered to a Porphyrian kind of Neoplatonism.[48] Although called to the episcopacy in 410 CE (around the time of Proclus' birth), he remained loyal to his Diotima. It is a hotly debated matter as how fully he embraced Christianity. Apparently as a philosopher he did not himself believe many of the doctrines which as a bishop he had to teach in public.[49] However this may be, his hymns show that, if not an orthodox Christian, he was a son of the Church all the same.[50] It is exactly this mixture of Porphyrian Neoplatonism with Christianity that sets Synesius apart from Proclus' Iamblichean Neoplatonism that seeks to incorporate paganism.

An often noticed *leitmotiv* in Synesius' hymns is the desire of the soul to return to God. As such this is in line with Porphyry's and

[46] Damascius *De Princip.* III p. 167, 1f. (ed. Westerink-Combès).

[47] A tenth hymn once ascribed to Synesius, is most certainly not by him, cf. Lacombrade 1978: 106.

[48] See e.g. Bregman 1982: 22; Vollenweider 1985: 14.

[49] See e.g. Lacombrade 1978: XXXVII; Gruber/Strohm 1991: 13.

[50] Bregman 1982 downplays the role of Christianity in Synesius' hymns. In his opinion, Synesius is primarily a Neoplatonist who was led to the church forced by historical circumstances. Vollenweider 1985 argues forcefully for the contrary view that the hymns are primarily an expression of a genuine Christian theology. See Gruber/Strohm 1991: 31-33 for a qualification of Vollenweider.

Proclus' idea that the essence of worship is to become god (§ 3.1), i.e. to return to the divine origin (*epistrophe*).[51] However, as we have seen, both Porphyry and Proclus stress that we should not celebrate (the highest) God by means of verbal hymns. To them, the idea that an absolutely transcendent God could be worshipped by sounds (i.e. in a material way) is nothing less than utter blasphemy. Our hymn can only consist in becoming like God. For Synesius, on the contrary, not only silent, noeric, hymns but also verbal ones are appropriate forms of worship, as his hymns testify.[52]

Moreover, Proclus holds that reverting directly upon the highest God is of no use for the soul that tries to ascend. The soul should initially revert upon its proximate cause, not on its ultimate cause (§ 3.2). Hence his hymns are directed to pagan deities that rank low in his hierarchy of the divine.[53] It is precisely because of their low ontological status that they can be invoked by means of verbal hymns. Perhaps we may recognize in this the influence of the Christian belief in a personal deity as opposed to the impersonal divine of the Neoplatonists.

As is well-known, Porphyry had only a very limited use for theurgy in the process of ascent of the human soul.[54] Synesius adopts this dismissive attitude towards theurgy. According to Vollenweider 1985: 23, Synesius assigns to the Christian gospel the crucial role in the process of salvation that the later Neoplatonists accorded to theurgy. Proclus, on the contrary, follows Iamblichus in his valuation of theurgy as *the* way to salvation. In chapter V, I shall try to show that Proclus' hymns can best be viewed as exercises in theurgy.

On a formal level too, there are noticeable differences between Proclus and Synesius. Proclus follows closely the vocabulary and metre of those ancient poets to whom he ascribes divine revelations, especially Homer, Hesiod and the Chaldaean oracles. The result is a set of hexametrical poems in epic Greek. Synesius' hymns, on the other hand, are far less uniform than those by Proclus (and far more

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51 See e.g. Bregman 1982: 35-36; Vollenweider 1985: 29-37, see esp. p. 31 ('Der Hymnus selbst ist gottgewirkter *Aufstieg* zur Gottheit.'); Gruber/Strohm 1991: 33 ('Was die folgenden Jahrhunderte mehr und mehr bewegte, die ὁμοίωσις θεῷ als religiöses Hochziel, ist bei dem späten Dichter aus Kyrene zentral.').

52 For Synesius' hymns as a libation of words to God, see e.g. *H.* I 8-11; for silent and verbal hymns as appropriate forms of worship, see *H.* II 80-86. Cf. Vollenweider 1985: 37-41.

53 As we shall see in chapter III.

54 On theurgy, see chapter IV.

attractive from a literary point of view, one may add). His hymns in Doric Greek are composed in various less common metres and display a far richer intertextuality with a wide range of other poems. This difference can partly be explained from the fact that Proclus' hymns are theurgical instruments. Proclus believes that the incorporation of (a small range of) inspired poems in his own poetry will attract the gods he is addressing.[55] Synesius just seeks to honour God by composing hymns that are as beautiful as possible.

This is not to say that there are absolutely no correspondences between the hymns of the two. They both use extensively the vocabulary of the Chaldaean Oracles, even if Synesius is not interested in theurgy.[56] Moreover, both are influenced by a long tradition of hymn-composing. This common ground explains at least some of the similarities, like in the case of Proclus *H.* VII 43-52 and Synesius *H.* V 75-83.[57] It is especially where these details are concerned that the hymns of Synesius can contribute something to the study of their Proclean counterparts.

6. *Conclusions*

In this chapter we have seen that for the Greeks a hymn is essentially a text in praise of a deity that may or may not be sung and that may or may not contain a prayer. Since Neoplatonists believed that the only way proper to honour the divine was to become as much as possible like the divine, they reinterpreted hymns as a movement of reversion (*epistrophe*) upon the divine. Whereas someone like Porphyry had been content to leave it at this level, the Athenian school started to elaborate on this idea, as appears from the use of the verb 'hymn' as a synonym for philosophizing about the divine and also from its efforts to reinterpret Plato's dialogues as hymns. Although it had been a long-standing tradition to call some of Plato's dialogues hymns (especially in the case of the *Timaeus*), Proclus and others sought to show that other dialogues too had been intended as hymns. This development reflects the Athenian Neoplatonists' conception of Platonism as theology, in which the role of the philosopher had

[55] On this subject, see chapter V § 4.3.
[56] On the Chaldaean Oracles and Synesius' hymns, see the classic study by Theiler 1942.
[57] On this correspondence, see Theiler 1942: 37.

become that of a theologian whose task it was to sing hymns in honour of the gods be it by means of songs or treatises. Hence Proclus the philosopher composed a whole collection of hymns, of which the seven that remain will be the topic of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GODS OF PROCLUS' HYMNS

1. *Introduction*

In the previous chapter we have seen that for Proclus every movement towards someone's or something's cause, ranging from Plato's *Parmenides* to the rotations of a plant following the sun, can be called a hymn. This is the movement of *epistrophe*. In the following chapters, I shall examine how this general principle applies to the seven hymns which are the object of this study. In this chapter, I shall discuss the nature of the gods addressed in Proclus' hymns and why he hymns these particular gods. In the following chapters, I shall study how these hymns are supposed to bring about that reversion towards the causes of the human soul.

2. *The divine hierarchy*

2.1 *The Theologia Platonica*

The natural order of things makes no leaps, especially not according to the later Neoplatonists. They judged the system of three hypostases they had inherited from Plotinus to be rather crude and applied themselves to the task of refining it by splitting up the three Plotinian levels into sub-levels and by adding other intermediary levels. All these new levels were equated with gods and as a result the Neoplatonic pantheon became a crowded place. Just to keep things simple, entities at different levels of reality may bear the same name. To give an example, Zeus may, in descending order, either be the noeric Nous (i.e. the Demiurge), the whole demiurgic triad of the hypercosmic order, or the prime member of that triad, or the whole demiurgic triad of the hypercosmic-encosmic order, or the prime member of that triad, or, probably, an encosmic deity. To complicate things even further, Proclus seeks to harmonize the different sacred texts of Athenian Neoplatonism, especially the Orphic, Chaldaean,

Pythagorean, Homeric and Platonic scriptures, into one system.[1] As a result, one deity can be referred to by its Orphic, Chaldaean and Homeric name.

If we were to reconstruct Proclus' theology from the scattered remarks in his commentaries such as those on Plato's *Republic, Timaeus* and *Cratylus*, this would be an almost impossible task. Fortunately however, Proclus was, in the words of Dodds, not so much a creative thinker, but rather a systematizer who carried to its utmost limits the ideal of one comprehensive philosophy that should embrace all the garnered wisdom of the ancient world.[2] The chief product of his systematizing effort is the *Theologia Platonica*, a monumental work spanning six volumes in the series of the *Collection des universités de France*, in which Proclus provides us with an elaborate discussion of the divine world, starting from the One and going down to the class of hypercosmic-encosmic gods. But these last-named divine beings are by no means the lowest in the Proclean system. Between them and us humans there are, in descending order, the encosmic gods, the universal souls and superior beings like angels, daemons and heroes.

Why these beings are not treated in the *Theol. Plat.* is not completely clear. From *Theol. Plat.* I 2, p. 9, 8-19 it appears that Proclus had, initially at least, the intention of dealing with these lower gods too, and even planned an appendix to the *Theol. Plat.* devoted to the hypercosmic and encosmic gods in Plato. The first thought that crosses one's mind is that the last part of the *Theol. Plat.* was lost during the process of transmission, as Saffrey-Westerink once suggested.[3] Later on, however, they came round to the opinion that we possess the complete *Theol. Plat.* Their main argument is that neither Damascius, nor a well-informed Byzantine scholiast make any reference to Proclus' treatment of the encosmic gods in the *Theol. Plat.* when one would expect them to do so. Moreover, from a note by the same scholiast, it appears that his *Theol. Plat.* consisted of six books.[4] If this is all there ever was, why did not Proclus complete his plan? Saffrey-Westerink[5] draw attention to the fact that, according to

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1 Cf. chapter II § 4.4.
2 Dodds 1963²: XXV.
3 Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* I 1968: LXIV f.
4 Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* VI 1997: XXXVIII f.
5 Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* VI 1997: XXXVII f.

In Tim. III 152, 7-153, 22, Proclus agrees with Plato that the study of the lower classes of divinities is a complex and difficult assignment. Add to this that the *Theol. Plat.* was probably written when Proclus was already a tired old man, and one can easily imagine why the project came to a premature end.

In my opinion, we have good reason to believe that, even if we accept the thesis that we possess the complete *Theol. Plat.*, Proclus nevertheless did not consider the project finished after the treatment of the hyper-encosmic gods. What we would expect in the case that Proclus had indeed considered the work finished, is an appropriate closure of the work. True, the last lines (*Theol. Plat.* VI 24, p. 114, 19-22) indicate the end of the discussion of the hyper-encosmic gods, but this would hardly do as an appropriate ending of the enormous project of the *Theol. Plat.* as a whole. The completely preserved treatises all have a neat ending. If the little ethical writings have this, one would certainly expect it in the case of the *Theol. Plat.* There is, after all, an important difference between the nature of the former works and the latter. Humans may be able to discuss ethical questions, but knowledge of the higher classes of gods is outside the reach of our mental capacities. As I shall explain later in this chapter, since our souls have made a complete descent into the world of becoming we are no longer a part of Nous, and as a result we are incapable of contemplating the higher realities on our own. We need divine illumination to do so. Proclus himself stresses this in his introduction to the *Theol. Plat.* and consequently invokes the gods for enlightenment.[6] For the same reason, Proclus opens the *Parmenides* commentary with a prayer. It would be only natural to end a work like the *Theol. Plat.* in the same solemn way as it started, especially because it was conceived as part of the worship of the divine.[7] Iamblichus and Simplicius provide us with an indication that this was indeed a honoured custom. Iamblichus ends his *De Mysteriis* (*Myst.* X 8) with a prayer, not unlike Simplicius' prayer at the end of his commentary on Epictetus' *Encheiridion.* In the same way, the latter's commentaries on Aristotle's *Categoriae* and *De caelo* close with a prayer. As H. D. Saffrey rightly remarks in this context: '*C'était en effet une chose habituelle de terminer un traité de théologie par une prière. Il est probable que c'était également une habitude de Proclus, mais il se trouve que,*

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[6] *Theol. Plat.* I 1, pp. 7, 9-8, 15.
[7] See chapter II § 4.4.

malheureusement, tous ses grands écrits théologiques sont mutilés de leur fin, si bien que les dernières pages en sont perdues.'[8]

Be this as it may, the situation constitutes a problem for our present purpose. My claim is that the gods invoked in the hymns are notably the lower classes of gods, and these classes happen to be partly left out of consideration in the *Theol. Plat.* Thus two *caveats* are in place. On the one hand, we must make completely sure that e.g. Zeus in *H.* VI is indeed one of the different manifestations of Zeus we find in the *Theol. Plat.* and not for example an encosmic manifestation of Zeus, which, since he is an encosmic deity, falls outside the actual scope of the *Theol. Plat.* On the other hand, it is possible that some hymns are directed to deities which are not mentioned in the *Theol. Plat.* In that case we will have to determine whether this happens to be the case because that deity falls outside the scope of the *Theol. Plat.* or that it is an alias for a god mentioned in *Theol. Plat.*

2.2 *The divine hierarchy according to* Theol. Plat.

We cannot undertake to give a full presentation of the divine hierarchy in the present context. Instead we give a schematic presentation (*Figure* 1) based on a valuable discussion by Saffrey-Westerink[9] of Proclus' theology as presented in the *Theol. Plat.*, together with a correction by Steel.[10]

Starting from above with the One, we can distinguish in descending ontological order nine groups of gods. These can be organized in three classes:

(a) the First God consisting of I. The One and II. The Henads (the latter are the participable representatives of the One);

(b) the gods transcending the cosmos consisting of those belonging to III. Being, IV. Life and V. Nous;

(c) the gods of the cosmos consisting of those belonging to the groups of VI. The Hypercosmic Gods (the gods that are above the cosmos), VII. The Hyper-Encosmic Gods (the gods that are both above and in the cosmos), VIII. The Encosmic Gods (the gods that are in the cosmos) and IX. Lower Gods.

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[8] Saffrey 1994: 67. For a discussion of this tradition of ending philosophical works with prayers, see also Ilsetraut Hadot 1996: 13-16.

[9] Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* I 1968: lx-lxvii.

[10] Steel 2000: 392-395.

Apart from the One, all other eight groups consist of a plurality of gods. Since the groups of Being and Life do not feature in the subsequent discussion, it will suffice to indicate that in these two groups there are nine of them. In the cases of Nous, the Hypercosmic Gods, and the Hyper-encosmic Gods, we have given the names of the individual gods that make up these groups. In most cases, these individual gods are organized in triads.[11] Here we find the deities that are invoked in the hymns. Their names have been printed in bold. To Saffrey-Westerink's scheme I have added Hecate (first member of the life-making triad of the hypercosmic gods), Helios (the elevating triad of the hypercosmic gods), and the Muses. The equation of Artemis with Hecate is based on *Theol. Plat.* VI 11, p. 51, 24-28, from which it appears that the *barbaroi*, i.e. the Syrian theurgists,[12] call Artemis Hecate. That of the triad of Apollo with Helios on *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, esp. p. 58, 1-4. The place of the Muses is not mentioned at all in the *Theol. Plat.* They belong to the lower gods mentioned by Plato (especially the *Phaedrus*) which Proclus had planned to discuss in the appendix to the *Theol. Plat.* (see § 2.1).

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[11] On the importance of the triadic structure in Proclus' thought, see Beierwaltes 1979²: 24-31.

[12] Thus Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* VI 1997 additional n. 7 to p. 51 on p. 151f.

I. The One
II. The Henads
III. Being: the nine noetic gods
IV. Life: the nine noetic-and-noeric gods
V. Nous: the noeric gods
- pure Nous (Cronos)
- noeric life [**Rhea = Mother of Gods *H.* VI**]
- demiurgical Nous (**Zeus [*H.* VI]**)

monad, which separates these gods from the lower ones.

triad of Couretes

VI. The Hypercosmic Gods (also known as Leader-Gods)

demiurgical triad (Zeus):
- Zeus
- Poseidon
- Pluto

life-making triad (Kore):
- Artemis=**Hecate [*H.* VI]**
- Persephone
- **Athena [*H.* VII]**

elevating triad: Apollo=**Helios [*H.* I]**

immaculate triad: Corybantes

VII. The Hyper-Encosmic Gods

demiurgical gods:
- Zeus
- Poseidon
- Hephaistos

guardian gods:
- Hestia
- Athena
- Ares

life-making gods:
- Demeter
- Hera
- Artemis

elevating gods:
- Hermes
- **Aphrodite [*H.* II and V]**
- **Apollo [*H.* I, 19]**

VIII. The Encosmic gods

IX. Lower Gods (not discussed in the *Theol. Plat.*)

Muses [*H.* III]

Figure 1: The divine hierarchy according to Proclus

2.3 *The place of the gods of the hymns in the divine hierarchy*

Helios in *H.* I is Apollo/Helios of the elevating triad of the hypercosmic gods. Not only is the latter the only Helios mentioned in Proclus, but, what is more, the treatment of Apollo/Helios in *Theol. Plat.* VI c. 12 displays striking similarities to the Helios in the hymn, which will be discussed in the commentary on *H.* I.

Aphrodite in *H.* II is less easy to locate in the great chain of divine beings. The only Aphrodite in the *Theol. Plat.* is briefly dealt with in *Theol. Plat.* VI 22, p. 98, 17-20. This Aphrodite is located in the elevating triad of the hyper-encosmic gods. The Aphrodite of this hymn fits the description of that Aphrodite, at least partially. The latter Aphrodite is the source of the erotic inspiration that leads us towards divine Beauty, and this is one of the functions of the Aphrodite in *H.* II (see esp. vss. 4-5 and vss. 19-21 with my commentary).

The Muses in *H.* III are not attested in the *Theol. Plat.* From the commentary on the *Cratylus* we learn that they belong to the series of Apollo (see my commentary on *H.* III 2) who acts as their leader. Which Apollo does Proclus have in mind here: the one who constitutes the reverting triad among the hypercosmic gods, or the member of the reverting triad of the hyper-encosmic gods? Probably the latter, for in the extensive discussion of the former Apollo no mention is made of the Muses. Of the second Apollo, however, it is said that he perfects everything and makes everything revert by means of *mousikê* and pulls everything up by means of harmony and rhythm towards the noeric truth and the light there (*Theol. Plat.* VI 22, p. 98, 20-4: καὶ δι' ἁρμονίας καὶ ῥυθμοῦ πρὸς τὴν νοερὰν ἀνέλκων ἀλήθειαν καὶ τὸ ἐκεῖ φῶς). The translation of *mousikê* as 'l'art des Muses' by Saffrey-Westerink may be somewhat poetical, but is nevertheless justified. From the quotations taken from the *In Crat.* and discussed in my commentary in vss. 1 and 2, it appears that the Muses are supposed to do just this. Moreover, the image of being pulled up towards the divine light by harmony and rhythm reoccurs almost *verbatim* in *H.* III 15 in connection with the Muses (ἕλκετ' ἐμὴν ψυχὴν παναλήμονα πρὸς φάος ἁγνόν). The Muses, belonging to the series of Apollo as they do, are of course his inferiors, so we may suppose them to rank below the hyper-encosmic gods.

The anonymous gods of *H.* IV are problematic. It has been suggested that these are the gods of the Chaldaean Oracles. However, even if this suggestion is accepted, we are still at a loss what the

ontological status of these gods is.[13] In the introduction to *H.* IV, I shall propose that this is a general prayer to all the gods who may lead us to divine wisdom, comparable to the prayers at the beginning of the commentary on the *Parmenides* and the *Theologia Platonica.*

For Aphrodite in *H.* V the same more or less applies as for Aphrodite in *H.* II. She too has a clear anagogic component (vss. 14-15), although she has also downward directed concerns with this material world; see the first part of the hymn, especially vss. 5-11, with my commentary.

H. VI invokes Hecate and Ianus alias Zeus and perhaps Rhea, if that is to whom the invocation 'Mother of the Gods' in vs. 1 refers.[14] The *Theologia Platonica* places Hecate as an alias of Artemis in the triad of the life-making goddesses in the hyper-encosmic class. Hecate is closely connected to Rhea, her cause. Rhea holds the middle position in the triad of Nous. The Zeus invoked is the Demiurgic Nous (lowest member of the triad of Nous), as is indicated by the adjective ὕπατος in vs. 3, for which see my commentary *ad loc.*

The Athena in *H.* VII is the Athena of the life-making triad of the hypercosmic gods. This appears from the fact that in *Theol. Plat.* VI 11, p. 52, 24-27, this Athena is equated with the Athena mentioned in *Tim.* 24c7f. as a lover of war and wisdom. Proclus' exegesis of this phrase in his *Timaeus* commentary coincides with his treatment of Athena in *H.* VII, as will be shown in the commentary on the hymn, so we can be sure that this is the Athena invoked in this hymn.

We must conclude, then, that the gods invoked in the hymns are minor deities. It is only in *H.* VI that Proclus invokes gods (Zeus and perhaps Rhea) on the level of Nous, which in itself is still not a very elevated hypostasis. Even in this case, however, it happens in connection with a prayer to Hecate, a goddess on the level of the hypercosmic gods (also known as leader-gods). Leaving the anonymous gods of *H.* IV aside for the moment, it seems to me that *the hymns address two types of deities.* On the one hand there are the hypercosmic gods (*H.* I, VI, and VII). On the other there are lower divinities that are in the Platonic tradition associated with divinely inspired madness (*H.* II, III, and V).

Below I shall advance the hypothesis that the hypercosmic or leader-gods accompany an important phase in the ascent of the

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[13] On the question whether or not these gods are the gods of the Chaldaean Oracles, see the introduction to *H.* VI.

[14] See my introduction to *H.* VI.

human soul: the unification of the soul on the level of Nous, also referred to as reaching the paternal harbour. The gods that cause divine madness may in their turn support our attempts to reach that harbour. First we shall briefly discuss the process of ascent of the human soul that may be understood as a process of unification, with special attention for the unification on the level of Nous.

3. *The unification of the soul*

Ultimately Neoplatonism pivots on a single principle: unity. At the top of reality is the absolute One. It transcends all things and causes them. The further that entities are removed from this ultimate cause, the more their degree of unity diminishes and the greater their degree of plurality becomes. Absolute plurality comes down to non-being, for being demands some degree of 'one-ness', everything that is, is an 'one something'. This also helps to explain why the One is the absolute cause of all things, even causing and transcending Being (see above *Figure* 1). Since, according to the Neoplatonists, causes are more perfect than their products, and since all things strive after perfection, all things ultimately strive after unity.[15] According to Proclus this was exactly what Plato's *Parmenides* was about. Syrianus had already asserted that the dialogue was about all things in so far as all things are the offspring of one cause and are dependent on that cause, i.e. the One. Proclus adds:

> **T. 3.1** ... and indeed, if we may express our own opinion, in so far as all things are deified; for each thing, even the lowest grade of being you could mention, becomes god in participating in unity according to its rank. For if God and the One are the same because there is nothing greater than God and nothing greater than the One, then to be unified is the same as to be deified.[16]

In chapter II § 3, we have seen that the goal of Platonic ethics and Neoplatonic worship is to become like God. Here, becoming like God is linked with the unification of the human soul. As we shall see

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[15] See for example *El.* § 13 (the One is identical with the universal Good) and § 113 (all things aspire the Good, and therefore the One).

[16] *In Parm.* I 641, 6-12 (translation Morrow/Dillon 1987: 36): ...καὶ, ἵνα τὸ δοκοῦν εἴπωμεν, καθ' ὅσον πάντα τεθέωται· τῷ γὰρ ἑνὸς μετέχειν ἕκαστα κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν τάξιν εἴποις ἂν τεθεῶσθαι, κἂν τὰ ἔσχατα λέγῃς τῶν ὄντων. Εἰ γὰρ θεὸς καὶ ἓν ταὐτὸν, διότι μήτε θεοῦ τι κρεῖττόν ἐστι μήτε ἑνὸς, τὸ ἡνῶσθαι τῷ τεθεῶσθαι ταὐτόν·

in the next paragraphs, the two groups of hymns we have just distinguished aim exactly at this.

The soul striving after its unification is hampered in its efforts by its present state. All souls that descend suffer from forgetfulness as far as their celestial origin is concerned. Most even forget completely about it and subsequently do not try to ascend towards a divine unified existence. The soul that does, however, has to cleanse itself from all influences of matter. If not, the ascending impure soul would contaminate the pure divine realm, and that cannot be. Daemons see to it that this does not happen. They keep the impure souls prisoner in the material realm. This fear of oblivion and captivity is vividly expressed in the hymns. We learn, e.g., about 'daemons, the bane of humans, wild-tempered, preparing evils for our miserable souls in order that we, after our fall into the depth of the loudly roaring sea of life, shall suffer under the yoke of the body, and forget about the elevated bright-shining court of the Father' (*H.* I 28-32). Proclus prays that 'a daemon, doing cruel things, may not keep me in the streams of forgetfulness, far away from the blessed ones, that a chilling Penalty may not bind my soul with the fetters of life, which, fallen in the waves of icy-cold birth, does not want to roam there all too long' (*H.* IV 7-12), that he may flee 'the misery of dark generation' (*H.* VI 10), that he may not 'become a prey and a spoil for the horrible Punishments, while lying on the ground' (*H.* VII 41-2).

The soul, then, has to cleanse itself from the influences of matter and try to awake the memories it has of its divine origin. Partially this was done by purifying rites to which the hymns refer (e.g. *H.* IV 4, VI 7), but it also involved changes in the condition of the soul brought about by the philosophical life. Proclus describes the ascent of the human soul in an exhortation to live the philosophical life in his commentary on the *Alcibiades* as follows:[17] First we are encouraged to flee the unphilosophical 'masses who roam around in herds' and not to partake in their way of life nor in their opinions.[18] In accordance with this injunction Proclus prays in *H.* III 12-3 that the wicked masses may not drag him from the small divine path of philosophy, a prayer repeated in *H.* IV 14. This small path (ἀτραπιτός) is the opposite of the highways which the *hoi polloi* follow (see commentary

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[17] *In Alc.* 245, 6-248, 3.

[18] *In Alc.* 245, 6-8: Κάτωθεν οὖν ἀρχομένοις φευκτέον τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἀγεληδὸν ἰόντων, ὥς φησι τὸ λόγιον, καὶ οὔτε ταῖς ζωαῖς αὐτῶν οὔτε ταῖς δόξαις κοινωνητέον.

to *H.* III 13). These people have been completely absorbed by the material world. We, on the contrary, should flee the 'irrational pleasures' (ἡδονὰς ἀλόγους) and 'the multifarious desires, which divide us in the body,'[19] the sensory perceptions which lead our thinking astray (αἰσθήσεις τὰς τὴν διάνοιαν ἀπατώσας), in short this whole world of images and fantasies.

Proclus admonishes us to turn to the sciences instead: 'Once we have fled these divided and diversified forms of life, let us ascend to science itself.'[20] Science is characterized by unity, for it reduces the plurality of what we know to a unity (ἕνωσις). However, science itself still contains a high degree of plurality, for it consists in discursive reasoning. Such in contrast to the knowledge on the level of Nous, for Nous grasps the forms by means of simple intuitions (τὰς ἁπλᾶς ἐπιβολάς). The soul should therefore go over to the noeric mode of life (τὴν νοερὰν ζωήν). Once we have ascended to Nous, 'we should with it contemplate intelligible being, being initiated in the vision of simple and immobile and undivided sorts of beings by means of simple and undivided intuitions.'[21] Note that Proclus refers here to Plato *Phdr.* 250c2ff.,[22] i.e. the myth of the winged charioteer who manages to follow the gods towards a vision of the Forms.

The transition to the noeric life of simple intuitions was considered to be an important step in the process of ascent and salvation of the human soul. The soul which has managed to contemplate the Forms *is exempt from the law of Fate* which rules over mankind and ties it to the world of matter. For Fate has only power over the material realm, and the soul that has ascended to Nous has left this behind it. No longer is it tormented by the daemons that separate the impure souls from the pure divine world, for it has become pure. No longer it is forced to be reborn again in the material. Instead it is allowed to return to its native star and lead a blissful existence (see commentary to *H.* III 7). Since it means the end of our wanderings in the material world, it is sometimes compared to reaching a harbour or, to be

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19 *In Alc.* 245, 9-10: φευκτέον τὰς ὀρέξεις τὰς πολυειδεῖς, αἳ μερίζουσιν ἡμᾶς περὶ τὸ σῶμα κτλ.

20 *In Alc.* 246, 8-10: ταῦτα δὴ πάντα τὰ μεριστὰ καὶ ποικίλα τῆς ζωῆς εἴδη φεύγοντες ἐπ' αὐτὴν ἀναδράμωμεν τὴν ἐπιστήμην κτλ.

21 *In Alc.* 247, 5-8: ἐπὶ τοῦτον τοίνυν τὸν νοῦν ἀναβάντες μετ' αὐτοῦ τὴν νοητὴν οὐσίαν θεασώμεθα, ταῖς ἁπλαῖς καὶ ἀμερίστοις ἐπιβολαῖς τὰ ἁπλᾶ καὶ ἀτρεμῆ καὶ ἀμέριστα τῶν ὄντων ἐποπτεύοντες γένη.

22 ὁλόκληρα δὲ καὶ ἁπλᾶ καὶ ἀτρεμῆ καὶ εὐδαίμονα φάσματα μυούμενοί τε καὶ ἐποπτεύοντες κτλ.

more precise, to reaching the Paternal Harbour, about which more below (§ 4.3). This theory about the escape from Fate stems from the Chaldaean Oracles (for which see Lewy 1978[2]: 212-213), although its has of course — as so often in the case of the Oracles — a Platonic background. Already Plato in *Phdr.* 248e-249a had promised an escape from the cycle of generation to those who dedicated themselves during three times to the philosophical life. Of special importance is Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 130, according to which the souls that have seen 'the works of the Father' (i.e. the Forms), 'flee the shameful wing of allotted Fate' (μοίρης εἱμαρτῆς τὸ πτερὸν φεύγουσιν ἀναιδές). The quotation returns in Proclus *Providentia* 21, 15f. and *In Tim.* III 266, 14ff. which both express the same idea of escape of the realm of matter through contemplation of the Forms.

Finally (*In Alc.* 247, 8-248, 4), the soul should awaken the highest mode of existence (τὴν ἄκραν ὕπαρξιν) it is capable of. This mode of existence is referred to as the 'one in us' and 'flower of our being' (ἄνθος τῆς οὐσίας), a term from the Chaldaean theology. It is by this faculty of the soul that we make contact with the divine (τῷ θείῳ συναπτόμεθα). 'For like should always be grasped by like' (τῷ γὰρ ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὅμοιον πανταχοῦ καταληπτέον), and the most unified measures of reality (τὰ ἑνικώτατα μέτρα τῶν ὄντων) are grasped by the one in us. Proclus here refers to the henads, the divine representatives of the imparticipable One, which can be participated in. We thus become one and function in an unified manner (ἕν γενόμενοι καὶ ἑνοειδῶς ἐνεργήσαντες). This is the state of happiness which we may obtain through the philosophical life.

4. *Nous and the unification of the human soul*

4.1 *The soul's relation to Nous*

It is my contention that the hymns that address the leader-gods have to do with the passage of the soul to the noeric life. I shall try to prove this later on. Let us now look what this transition implies. In Proclus' exhortation to the philosophical life discussed above, he is afraid that his readership may misunderstand what he means by the noeric life of the soul:.

> **T. 3.2** I do not mean the Nous which transcends the soul, but the illumination itself which descends from above on the soul. Aristotle

> too refers to this one when he says that it is by means of nous that we know the definitions, and also Timaeus when he says that it only appears in the soul.[23]

Thus, we do not become Nous and transcend our own nature, i.e. that of Soul, but our soul is illuminated by Nous, while remaining itself. It is only because of this illumination that we may enjoy the contemplation of the simple and unvarying Forms as celebrated in the *Phaedrus*.

Proclus hints here at a debate among the Neoplatonists about a problem at the very heart of Platonism: what is the relation between the transcendent Forms, which, by their very nature, belong to a world completely different from ours, and our world? This is a double-edged problem. On the one hand, in a top-down perspective, a Platonist has to account for the fact that these Forms somehow cause the things in this world to exist. In the bottom-up perspective, the Platonic assertion that we may gain knowledge of the transcendent Forms stands in need of explanation. It is on the latter problem that we shall focus here.

One strategy is simply to deny that there is a substantial difference between the hypostasis of Nous, the realm of the Forms, and that of Soul. Its best known representative is Plotinus, who holds that, although we have ascended into the world of becoming, part of us is still anchored in Nous. That undescended part of us enjoys perpetual vision of the Forms. We may not always be aware of this, but that is another matter.[24]

Later Neoplatonists, at least from Iamblichus onwards, criticize this solution. They maintain that Nous and Soul differ essentially from each other, and that it is therefore impossible that a part of us remains forever in the realm of Nous: the human soul descends entirely. Proclus is among them.[25] He discusses the Plotinian position, without actually naming Plotinus, in connection with the problem of contemplating the Forms in *In Parm.* IV 948, 12ff.: here it

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23 *In Alc.* 247, 1-5: οὐ λέγω τὸν ἐξῃρημένον τῆς ψυχῆς νοῦν, ἀλλ' αὐτὴν τὴν ἐκεῖθεν ἔλλαμψιν τὴν ἐφήκουσαν τῇ ψυχῇ, περὶ οὗ καὶ ὁ 'Αριστοτέλης φησὶν ὅτι νοῦς ἐστὶν ᾧ τοὺς ὅρους γινώσκομεν, καὶ ὁ Τίμαιος ὅτι ἐν οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ ἐγγίνεται ἢ ἐν ψυχῇ.

24 For a good discussion of the Plotinian position, see Steel 1978: 34-38.

25 For Iamblichus' and Proclus' criticism of Plotinus, see Proclus *In Tim.* III 333, 28ff. For a discussion of this text in which I argue that Iamblichus did not abandon the concept of an undescended soul entirely, see Van den Berg 1998. For Proclus' criticism, see also *El.* § 211, *Theol. Plat.* V 19, p. 71, 16ff. with Saffrey-Westerink's additional note 4 to p. 71 on p. 185.

is emphasised that human knowledge, the science in us (ἡ παρ’ ἡμῖν ἐπιστήμη) is quite different from the knowledge based on the contemplation of the Forms which the gods enjoy. This is exactly the same point as he raised in the *In Alc.*-passage, in which he explained that *episteme* has a far higher degree of plurality than knowledge obtained from the simple intuitions of the Forms. Contrary to what some say, Proclus goes on, the noetic cosmos, i.e. the realm of the Forms, is not situated in us. It transcends us because it is the cause of our being. Nor should we say that part of us always remains above in that cosmos. For never could the part that remains above be yoked together with that which has fallen away from its proper intellection. Nor should we assume that the soul is of the same being (ὁμοούσιος) as the gods. The upshot of all this is that only divine Nous is capable of contemplation of the Forms. Our knowledge of the Forms derives from illumination from the gods:

> **T. 3.3** The transcendent Forms exist by themselves; what exists by itself and of itself is not in us; What is not in us is not on the level of our knowledge; what is not on the level of our knowledge is unknowable by our faculty of knowledge; so then the transcendent Forms are unknowable by our faculty of knowledge. They may, then, be contemplated only by divine Nous. This is so for all Forms, but especially for those that are beyond the noeric gods; for neither sense-perception, nor cognition based on opinion, nor pure reason, nor noeric cognition of our type serves to connect the soul with those Forms, but only illumination from the noeric gods renders us capable of joining ourselves to those noetic-and-noeric Forms, as I recall someone saying under divine inspiration.[26] The nature of those Forms is, then, unknowable to us, as being superior to our intellection and to the partial conceptions of our souls. And it is for this reason, indeed, that the Socrates of the *Phaedrus*, as we said before, compares the contemplation of them to mystic rites and initiations and visions,...[27]

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[26] Perhaps Syrianus (Morrow/Dillon 1987: 300 n. 92), but, as J. Dillon has kindly pointed out to me, Iamblichus *In Parm.* Fr. 2A seems to point in the direction of Iamblichus.

[27] *In Parm.* IV 949, 13-34, trans. Morrow/Dillon 1987: 300 (slightly adapted): τὰ καθ’ αὑτὰ καὶ αὑτῶν ὄντα οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν· τὰ οὐκ ὄντα ἐν ἡμῖν οὐκ ἔστι σύστοιχα πρὸς τὴν ἡμετέραν ἐπιστήμην· τὰ μὴ ὄντα σύστοιχα πρὸς τὴν ἡμετέραν ἐπιστήμην ἄγνωστά ἐστιν ὑπὸ τῆς ἡμετέρας ἐπιστήμης· τὰ ἄρα ἐξῃρημένα εἴδη ἄγνωστά ἐστι πρὸς τὴν ἡμετέραν ἐπιστήμην· νῷ γὰρ μόνῳ τῷ θείῳ θεατά ἐστι· καὶ πάντα μὲν τὰ εἴδη, διαφερόντως δὲ ὅσα καὶ τῶν νοερῶν ἐστιν ἐπ’ ἐκεῖνα θεῶν· οὔτε γὰρ ἡ αἴσθησις, οὔτε ἡ δοξαστικὴ γνῶσις, οὔτε ὁ καθαρὸς λόγος, οὔτε ἡ νοερὰ γνῶσις ἡ ἡμετέρα συνάπτει τὴν ψυχὴν τοῖς εἴδεσιν ἐκείνοις, μόνη δὲ ἡ ἀπὸ τῶν νοερῶν θεῶν ἔλλαμψις δυνατοὺς ἡμᾶς ἀποφαίνει συνάπτεσθαι τοῖς νοητοῖς ἐκείνοις καὶ νοεροῖς εἴδεσιν, ὥς πού φησί τις λέγων ἐνθέως. Ἄγνωστος οὖν ἡμῖν ἡ φύσις τῶν εἰδῶν ἐκείνων, ὡς

Interestingly enough, Proclus refers to the mystery-rites of the *Phaedrus*-myth when talking about these visions of the Forms which we obtain through illumination. In Plato all this talk about mystery-rites was probably just a simile. Proclus, however, took things literally.[28] One of the most striking features of his philosophy is the important place he assigns for a kind of ritual called theurgy. It is generally assumed that there is a connection between on the one hand the paramount role that theurgy was allowed to play in Neoplatonism from Iamblichus onwards, and on the other side the rejection of the Plotinian position about the nature of the soul by Iamblichus and subsequent Neoplatonists.[29] Somehow theurgy was supposed to bridge the gap between the soul and the realm of Nous which resulted from the denial of a partly undescended soul. I intend to show that the hymns to the leader-gods were part of these theurgical attempts to obtain this noeric illumination. In the following chapters, I shall elaborate on the notion of theurgy, and show what is theurgical about the hymns. For the moment, however, we shall turn to the question why one has to invoke leader-gods in order to be illuminated.

4.2 *The divine Nous*

In order to be able to understand the role of the leader-gods in the process of illumination, it is necessary to study the nature of the divine Nous first. Proclus, in the wake of his admired master Syrianus, equates the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* with Nous.[30] To some readers this may perhaps appear hardly surprising. The Demiurge in the *Timaeus* contemplates after all the Forms in order to cause the universe; the appropriate mental faculty to contemplate the Forms is Nous, therefore it is reasonable to suppose that the contemplator *par excellence* of the Forms is also the divine Nous. However, among the ancient commentators on the *Timaeus* the nature of the Demiurge

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κρείττων τῆς ἡμετέρας νοήσεως καὶ τῶν μεριστῶν ἐπιβολῶν τῆς ἡμετέρας ψυχῆς· διὸ καὶ ὁ ἐν Φαίδρῳ Σωκράτης, ὡς προείπομεν, τελεταῖς ἀπεικάζει καὶ μυήσεσι καὶ ἐποπτείαις τὴν ἐκείνων θεωρίαν, ...

[28] On the tradition of mystery-language in Greek philosophy, see Sheppard 1980: 146-149, see further Riedweg 1987 on mystery-language in Plato, Philo and Clemens.

[29] See, e.g., Steel 1978: 37-8; Saffrey 1984[d]: 165-6; Shaw 1995: 11ff.

[30] On how Syrianus arrived at this view, see Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* II 1974 p. 101, additional n. 4 to p. 39.

was a matter of dispute. The Demiurge had been located virtually anywhere between the hypercosmic soul (Porphyry) and the Good (Atticus), as we learn from the doxography Proclus offers us in the course of his discussion of the issue.[31]

The Demiurge/Nous stands on the threshold between two worlds. On the one hand, as the ultimate cause of this universe, it is its supreme god. On the other hand it is at the bottom of the transcendent realm in which, as the divine Nous, it looks upwards to the Forms above it. It thus functions as the link between the two worlds, between us and the Forms. This situation has important soteriological implications. Life according to Nous is, as appeared above, an important step in the process of unification of the soul. However, in Proclus' theory of causation at least, things can only revert upon their cause, not upon things that are completely alien to them.[32] If we want to live in accordance with Nous — which implies that we revert upon it — Nous has to be in some sense our cause. As the general cause of the whole universe, Nous is also our cause and we may thus revert upon it. It is precisely for this reason that Proclus vehemently attacks Aristotle's theory of the divine Nous in the *Timaeus*-commentary.[33] In (Proclus' reading of) Aristotle, the divine Nous is the Unmoved Mover, the *causa finalis* of the universe, but certainly not its *causa efficiens*, i.e. its Demiurge. The Aristotelian Nous would therefore be alien to the human soul. In that case reversion would be impossible and the divine Nous could never act as a *causa finalis* of the universe.

The position of Nous as the Demiurge and therefore ultimate cause of the cosmos helps to explain why a life in accordance with Nous is such an important step in the process of unification/deification of the human soul. The Demiurge contains all Forms as causes for this universe. In that way he is analogous to the One which contains all causes both of this universe and the intelligible realm.[34] Thus the soul that shares in Nous by means of illumination increases its degree of unity and thus becomes more divine. In the unity of Nous, it leaves the plurality of this world behind it. Just as all things ultimately derive their perfection from participating in the unity of its

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[31] *In Tim.* I 303, 4-310, 2; for a detailed discussion of the nature of the Demiurge which takes the various ancient interpretations into account, see Brisson 1994: 29-106. He concludes that the Demiurge is a nous.

[32] Cf. *El.* § 35.

[33] For a discussion of Proclus' criticism of Aristotle's divine Intellect as only a *causa finalis*, see Steel 1987: 213-225 and 1996 esp. 242-247.

[34] See **T. 2.8**.

ultimate cause the One (see **T. 3.1**), in the same manner everything in this cosmos, and notably the human souls, derive their unifying perfection from their cause. As Proclus puts it in *Theol. Plat.* V 19, p. 70, 21ff.: 'All immortal souls that obtained their procession from the Demiurge are filled with the unified and noeric providence (τῆς ἡνωμένης καὶ νοερᾶς προνοίας) that comes from him, because everywhere the offspring depending on its causes participates in the perfection that comes from them.'

4.3 *The paternal harbour*

If, as has been argued, illumination by Nous constitutes an important phase in the process of the unification of the soul, we would expect it to be mentioned in a special way. And indeed Proclus does do this. He connects the illumination by Nous to what is probably a Chaldaean concept:[35] the reaching of the paternal harbour (ὁ πατρικὸς ὅρμος).

What does this mysterious experience entail? This is clarified by Proclus' discussion in *In Tim.* I 300, 28-302, 25 of Plato's remark in *Ti.* 28c3-4 that it is quite a task to find the maker and father of this universe, i.e. the Demiurge. Finding the Father appears to amount to unification with the Demiurge-Nous, with the result that the soul is initiated in the vision of the *Phaedrus.* Proclus cites here once more *Phdr.* 250c (*In Tim.* I 302, 6-8). We recall here what was said in **T. 3.3**: only divine Nous is able to contemplate the intelligible; therefore contemplation of the divine requires that we are in some way unified with Nous. Finding the Father is a matter of touching on the intelligible and obtaining unification with the Demiurgic Nous (*In Tim.* I 302, 13-4: τὴν ἐπαφὴν τοῦ νοητοῦ καὶ τὴν ἕνωσιν τὴν πρὸς τὸν δημιουργικὸν νοῦν). Proclus describes the process as follows:

> **T. 3.4** For after the wanderings in the world of becoming (τὴν πλάνην τῆς γενέσεως) and the purification and the light of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), the noeric activity finally shines out and so does nous in us, which moors (ὁρμίζων) the soul in the Father and establishing it in a pure way in the demiurgic intellections (ἐνιδρύων αὐτὴν ἀχράντως ἐν ταῖς δημιουργικαῖς νοήσεσι) and linking light with light, not something like the light of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) but an even more beautiful, more noeric and simpler light than that. For this is the

[35] On the likely Chadaean origin of the expression, see Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* IV p. 147 additional n. 3 to p. 43.

> paternal harbour (ὁ πατρικὸς ὅρμος), finding the Father, the pure unification with him.[36]

Let us compare this text to the philosopher's progress as sketched in the commentary on the *Alcibiades*. There it was said that the philosopher should flee the temptations of the material world, here referred to as 'the wanderings in the world of becoming.' Instead the philosopher should turn to the sciences, *episteme*, the knowledge of discursive thought, referred to in **T. 3.4** as the 'light of knowledge.' However, *episteme* was still characterized by a great degree of multiplicity as opposed to the noeric intuitions. **T. 3.4** underscores this when Proclus describes the light of Nous as 'an even more beautiful, more noeric and simpler light' than that of *episteme*. The contact with the world of Nous is described in terms of illumination. It is the noeric light, i.e. nous in us, which shines out. In **T. 3.2** Proclus stressed that he was not talking about the transcendent Nous, but nous as far as our soul participates in it. Here this is brought out again, for Proclus is talking about nous in us. The soul thus illuminated is placed in the 'demiurgic intellections.' These are the contemplations of the Demiurge of the Forms, the initiation into the simple, unvarying and undivided visions of the *Phaedrus*.

Proclus summarizes this state as reaching the paternal harbour and unification with the Father. Is this notion of unification (ἕνωσις) with the Demiurge compatible with what we said above, namely that the soul does not become Nous but is illuminated by Nous (see **T. 3.2**)? Part of the problem with the term *henosis* is that it is used by scholars to describe the mystical union of the soul to the One in Plotinus, although Plotinus himself never uses it that way.[37] In Plotinus the unification of the soul with the One is complete, and for the duration of that event, the soul appears to lose its own identity.[38] It is not very likely that the unification of the Proclean soul to Nous would involve complete fusion with Nous to the extent that the soul is

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[36] *In Tim.* I 302, 17-25: μετὰ γὰρ τὴν πλάνην τῆς γενέσεως καὶ τὴν κάθαρσιν καὶ μετὰ τὸ τῆς ἐπιστήμης φῶς ἀναλάμπει τὸ νοερὸν ἐνέργημα καὶ ὁ ἐν ἡμῖν νοῦς, ὁρμίζων τὴν ψυχὴν ἐν τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ἐνιδρύων αὐτὴν ἀχράντως ἐν ταῖς δημιουργικαῖς νοήσεσι καὶ φῶς φωτὶ συνάπτων, οὐχ οἷον τὸ τῆς ἐπιστήμης, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦδε κάλλιον καὶ νοερώτερον καὶ ἑνοειδέστερον· οὗτος γάρ ἐστιν ὁ πατρικὸς ὅρμος, ἡ εὕρεσις τοῦ πατρός, ἡ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἄχραντος ἕνωσις.

[37] For the use of the term *henosis* in Plotinus and by scholars writing on Plotinus, see Meijer 1992: 307.

[38] Admittedly this interpretation is not uncontested. See Meijer 1992: 307-315 who defends it against several objections that have been put forward.

of one substance with Nous. As Steel has shown,[39] the Proclean soul never changes in respect of its being or substance (οὐσία). In the process of descent into the material realm, it is only the faculties and the activities of the soul which suffer. The term *henosis* does not force us to assume something like a substantial change. In Proclus, there is something like an unmixed *henosis* (ἕνωσις ἀσύγχυτος). An example of this is the human soul, which consists of different parts, some superior to others, which none the less constitute an unity.[40] Thus the human soul can be in a state of *henosis* with Nous without losing its own nature. Since the contact with Nous stimulates the faculties and acts of the soul which had become damaged in the process of descent, the soul will now act in a more unified and noeric way than before the unification with Nous.

This unification with the Father is described by means of a nautical image: nous in us moors (ὁρμίζων) the soul in the paternal harbour (πατρικὸς ὅρμος). The image of safely reaching harbour after a troublesome journey, in this case the 'wanderings in the world of becoming', is a common one to express the idea of reaching ones goal after a lot of hardship.[41] Since the One is the ultimate goal of the ascending soul, Proclus can for example call the One 'the safe harbour for all beings' (*Theol. Plat.* I 25, p. 111, 25: ὅρμος ἀσφαλής). In the same sense it is now said of the soul reaching a higher state of existence in Nous and thus leaving the world of *genesis* behind itself. The archetypal seafarer who reaches his destination after many, many sufferings is of course Odysseus. Proclus connects the (probably) Chaldaean notion of the paternal harbour to his allegorical interpretation of the *Odyssey*:

> **T. 3.5** Only life according to Nous is free from wandering (ἀπλανές), and this is the mystical harbour of the soul, to which the poem brings Odysseus after the many wanderings in life.[42]

I shall discuss Proclus' allegorical reading of Homer in chapter VI; for Proclus' allegorical interpretation of the *Odyssey*, see my commentary to *H.* VI 10-12. For the moment it suffices to point out that Proclus connects the two images. As we shall see below, the same

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[39] Steel 1978: 69-73.
[40] See e.g. *In RP.* I 234, 15.
[41] On this *topos*, see Bonner 1941.
[42] *In Parm.* V 1025, 32-36: μόνη δὲ ἡ κατὰ νοῦν ζωὴ τὸ ἀπλανὲς ἔχει, καὶ οὗτος ὁ μυστικὸς ὅρμος τῆς ψυχῆς, εἰς ὅν καὶ ἡ ποιήσις ἄγει τὸν Ὀδυσσέα μετὰ τὴν πολλὴν πλάνην τῆς ζωῆς.

connection appears in the hymns. Judging from the last line of text **T. 3.4**, the paternal harbour is obviously a well-defined concept ('For *this* is the paternal harbour…'). However, it is not attested outside Proclus. In Proclus it is found five times: once in the commentary on the *Timaeus* (**T. 3.4**), once in the commentary on the *Cratylus* and three times in *Theol. Plat.* IV. The use of it in the commentary on the *Cratylus* is comparable with that in the commentary on the *Timaeus*: Athena is said 'to establish us in the harbour of the Father' (ἐνιδρύουσα τῷ ὅρμῳ τοῦ πατρός).[43] This is the Demiurgic Nous, as is apparent from a passage in the *In Tim.*, where Proclus, inspired by his sympathy for the subject,[44] dwells to some lengths on the exegesis of these names. In the course of it, he remarks (*In Tim.* I 168, 29-30): 'we call her (i.e. Athena) Saviour (σώτειρα), because she establishes every partial intellect in the total intellections of the Father' (ἐνιδρύουσα ταῖς ὁλικαῖς νοήσεσι τοῦ πατρός). This father is the Demiurge (*In Tim.* I 166, 3: τῷ πατρὶ καὶ δημιουργῳ κόσμου τοῦ σύμπαντος).

In the first part of *Theol. Plat.* IV the expression recurs three times, i.e. more than half of all occurrences. The reason why is easy to see. This part of the *Theol. Plat.* is dedicated to the exegesis of the *Phaedrus*-myth. As we noted, this myth about the contemplation of the Forms by the human soul is often cited in connection with the noeric illumination of the soul.

In *Theol. Plat.* IV 13, p. 43, 15, Proclus notes that two entities lead up to the supracelestial place of the *Phaedrus*: the individual intellect (νοῦς ὁ μερικός) installed in the souls, which elevates the souls towards the paternal harbour (43, 19: ὅρμον τὸν πατρικόν) and true *episteme*. Here we may recall **T. 3.2** which referred to the nous under discussion as the one of which Timaeus says that it appears only in the soul. Proclus further adds that this true *episteme* is a perfection of the soul. It circles around the supracelestial place and knows it only discursively (μεταβατικῶς), whereas the partial nous does so by a simple intellection (ἁπλῇ νοήσει). This remark illustrates once more the fact that *episteme* has less unity than noeric intellection and is therefore inferior to it.

Nonetheless, the term seems to be used in a somewhat different way in *Theol. Plat.* IV. In **T. 3.4** reaching the paternal harbour meant unification with the Demiurgic Nous and thus subsequently being

[43] *In Crat.* § 185, p. 113, 2.
[44] *In Tim.* I 169, 9-11.

able to contemplate the intelligible Forms. As we saw, the latter activity was described as 'touching the noetic' (τὴν ἐπαφὴν τοῦ νοητοῦ). In *Theol. Plat.* IV the paternal harbour seems to have become an equivalent for just touching the intelligible, leaving the unification with the Demiurge out of consideration. In this context Proclus seems to interpret the Father of the paternal harbour no longer as the maker and father of this cosmos from the *Timaeus*, but instead as the noetic Father, to whom the noetic-and-noeric gods elevate all things (*Theol. Plat.* IV 11, p. 38, 9-10). Thus he writes about the highest triad of the noetic-and-noeric gods that they 'radiate upon the other gods the contact with the noetic realm and the paternal harbour' (*Theol. Plat.* IV 21, p. 64, 23-24: ... τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς τὴν πρὸς τὸ νοητὸν συναφὴν ἐπιλάμπων καὶ τὸν ὅρμον τὸν πατρικόν). The paternal harbour apparently cannot be the Demiurgic Nous here, for that entity is situated far below the first noetic-and-noeric gods. Hence they cannot illuminate with that Nous other gods on the noetic-and-noeric level, who are still above it. On the contrary, the paternal harbour seems here to be an equivalent to the noetic world (level III in *Figure* 1 above). This reading is corroborated by the conclusion of the discussion of the noetic-and-noeric gods. There, Proclus remarks that the stages towards the contemplation of the intelligible Forms as described in the *Phaedrus* are many. He is referring to the different triads in the noetic-and-noeric realm which he has just described and which constitute subsequent stages in our initiation into the intelligible through which we have to pass. However all stages 'reach out towards the paternal harbour and the initiation into the Father.'[45] From the context it is clear that the paternal harbour must be that of the noetic Father, for how could the noetic-and-noeric gods ever lead up to a lower entity like the Demiurgic Nous?

My suggestion would be, therefore, that here we have a very exceptional case of Proclus changing his mind. As was pointed out in our discussion of **T. 3.4**, the notion of the paternal harbour seems to be a fixed one, probably of Chaldaean origin. This seems to rule out the possibility that there are paternal harbours on different levels of reality. This assumption is also justified by the fact that the description of the paternal harbour in the commentary on the *Timaeus* and *Theol. Plat.* IV converge at three points. First, the paternal harbour

[45] *Theol. Plat.* IV 26, p. 77, 20-21: Καὶ πολλοὶ μὲν οἱ βαθμοί, παντές δὲ εἰς τὸν πατρικὸν ὅρμον ἀνατείνουσιν καὶ τὴν πατρικὴν τελετήν·

has something to do with touching the noetic realm. Second, it is linked to the *Phaedrus*-myth. Third the role of nous in us as the entity which moors us in that paternal harbour. Given the fact that Proclus wrote the commentary on the *Timaeus* at the early age of twenty-eight whereas the *Theologia Platonica* is generally considered to be the product of his old age, it is not unlikely that somewhere during his long career he came around to the view that the Father in question was not the Demiurge but the noetic Father. Why he may have changed his thoughts is hard to say. Perhaps, when working on the *Theol. Plat.*, in which he divides up the divine world in minute detail, he realised that there was an enormous gap between the Demiurgic Nous and the level of the noetic realm (see *Figure* 1), and therefore decided that it was illogical to connect the unification with the Demiurgic Nous so closely to the contemplation of the intelligible, and that the Father involved thus had to be another than the Demiurge.

Be that as it may, we certainly need to distinguish between paternal harbour (I) and (II). The former is that of the commentary on the *Timaeus*, which identifies it with the Demiurgic Nous, the latter that of *Theol. Plat.* IV in which the Father is a noetic entity. The paternal harbour mentioned in the *In Crat.* refers to type (I), because the role of Athena as the goddess who installs the souls in the paternal intellections — it is the paternal harbour — recurs in the *Timaeus*-commentary. As for the hymns, we shall see that the references to the paternal harbour are to type (I), for it is the leader-gods who bring us to that harbour. Since then the leader-gods lead us back to the Demiurgic Nous, it has to be the paternal harbour type (I).

4.4 *Nous and the leader-gods*

As we have seen, Nous and the Demiurge are one and the same. We have also seen that this enables us to ascend towards Nous. What then is the relation of the leader-gods to the Demiurgic Nous and how do they contribute to our ascent?

The Demiurge in the *Timaeus* leaves most of the creation of the material universe to the younger gods. First among these lesser creating gods are, according to Proclus, the so-called leader gods (οἱ ἡγεμονικοὶ θεοί). Their nature is discussed at length in the first part of *Theol. Plat.* VI. The series of these gods are 'continuous with the Demiurge and Father of the universe and interwoven with him.

Through the perfecting power of him, it proceeds from him, is perfected and reverts upon it.'[46] They rule the universe[47] and are completely hyper-cosmic.[48] Their most important feature is their creating activity. The Demiurge contains all things, including the gods inferior to him, in the form of their causes.[49] He can act as the causing principle of the universe because he is able to contemplate the Forms. One cannot contemplate the Forms one by one, so the Demiurge is a πλήρωμα of all Forms before him.[50] As a result, he contains the things after him as unified causes.[51] Therefore the Demiurge is characterized by sameness.[52] The process of creation requires, however, that this unity is split up.[53] This process starts with the leader-gods. They are the utmost ends of the different series that come together in the same point, i.e. the Demiurge.[54] All products in one series thus finally depend on one cause. Because the products have the same cause in common, they display a likeness both towards each other and to their source. Thus, in the same way as the Demiurge is characterized by sameness, so are the leader-gods by likeness (ὁμοιότης).[55]

Since reversion is only made upon one's proximate cause, we do not turn to the Demiurge directly, but first to the leader of our series, i.e. a leader-god. In the words of *De Sacrificio*: 'For everything prays according to its own order and sings hymns on the leaders of the complete series.'[56] As we have seen, these leader-gods are characterized by likeness. It is this likeness that enables their products to revert upon them. For it is a general principle that 'all processions and all conversions are accomplished because of likeness (διὰ τὴν τῆς ὁμοιότητος αἰτίαν).'[57] We shall return to the anagogic function of likeness in greater detail in the next chapter in the context of theurgy.

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46 *Theol. Plat.* VI 1, p. 5, 11-14.
47 *Theol. Plat.* VI 1, p. 7, 5: ἄρχοντες τῶν ὅλων θεοί.
48 *Theol. Plat.* VI 2, p. 12, 1-6.
49 *Theol. Plat.* VI 3, p. 15, 14-5.
50 On the fact that each nous is a πλήρωμα of Forms, see *El.* § 177.
51 *Theol. Plat.* VI 3, p. 15, 14-17.
52 *Theol. Plat.* VI 3, p. 15, 26-7: κατὰ ταὐτὸν τῷ δημιουργῷ τὸ εἶναι παρέστιν.
53 *Theol. Plat.* VI 3, p. 16, 7ff.
54 For this idea, see *Theol. Plat.* VI 1, p. 5, 18-9; cf. chapter II § 3.2: cause and product necessarily have something in common.
55 *Theol. Plat.* VI 3, p. 16, 7-18
56 For a discussion of this text, see chapter II § 3.2, the discussion of **T. 2.3**.
57 *Theol. Plat.* VI 3, p. 17, 1-2.

In their turn, the leader-gods make the same movement towards their causes, which are contained in the Demiurge in a unified way. They 'fasten themselves by means of likeness to their causes, which pre-exist in the Demiurge, while lifting up everything and unfolding it in his unity,'[58] including 'the blessed souls among us, who are lifted up away from the wanderings in the world of becoming (τῆς γενεσιουργοῦ πλάνης) towards their own source.'[59] It should be noted that this elevation towards Nous leads us towards a greater degree of unity, thus of divinity, while we leave the material realm behind us.

4.5 *The leader-gods in the hymns*

To what extent then do the hymns to the leader-gods reflect the theory of the ascent towards the divine Nous as described above? I shall not treat the hymns here in their traditional order, but start with the hymns which bring out the relation with the theory best (*H.* VII to Athena, *H.* VI to the Mother of the Gods, Hecate and Zeus) and then proceed to the hymn to Helios.

H. VII to Athena is perhaps the best illustration of the foregoing treatment of the leader-gods. As we have seen, leader-gods are able to link us to the divine Nous, because they are closely related to him and act as the causes of whole series (see § 4.4 above). In *H.* VII 1-2 this is brought to the fore right away: Athena is invoked as 'child of the aegis-bearing Zeus, sprung forth from the paternal source and from the top of your series.' This Zeus and this source are the Demiurge. Athena's causal activities are celebrated in the first part of the hymn, where she is portrayed as a warrior. As I shall explain in the commentary, Proclus understood the martial features which tradition attributed to the goddess as references to her role in the cosmic process of causation. If Proclus is to be united with Athena, it is not enough that Athena is just a cause, she has to be Proclus' own cause, otherwise there is no bond of likeness between him and her. It is for this reason that Proclus stresses that he belongs to Athena (vs. 42).[60] Athena is first and foremost asked to give Proclus a blessed

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[58] *Theol. Plat.* VI 3, p. 19, 24 ff.: (Τὸ δὲ τῶν ἡγεμονικῶν θεῶν φῦλον) ἐξάπτει μὲν αὑτὸ διὰ τῆς ὁμοιότητος τῶν ἐν ἐκείνῳ προυπαρχόντων αἰτίων, πάντα δὲ ἀνατείνει καὶ ἀναπλοῖ πρὸς τὴν ἕνωσιν τὴν δημιουργικήν.

[59] *Theol. Plat.* VI 3, p. 16, 26-27: καὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων ψυχῶν τὰς εὐδαίμονας ἀπὸ τῆς γενεσιουργοῦ πλάνης ἐπὶ τὴν οἰκείαν πηγὴν ἀνατεινομένας.

[60] For the question how Proclus, as a non-native Athenian belongs to the series of Athena, see my commentary *ad loc.*

harbour after a life roaming around the earth (vs. 32 ὄλβιον ὅρμον ἀλωομένῳ περὶ γαῖαν). This harbour is the paternal harbour discussed above, as is indicated by vs. 36, where this harbour is equated with the palace of Zeus on Mt. Olympus. According to Proclus, this is the place where traditional mythology locates the Demiurge.[61] We recall here that, according to the commentaries on the *Cratylus* and the *Timaeus*, it was especially Athena who moored the soul in the paternal harbour and the demiurgic intellections (see § 4.3).

It is noteworthy that Proclus presents himself as wandering around the earth, i.e. in the realm of matter. Moreover we saw in **T. 3.4** and **T. 3.5** and a quote from *Theol. Plat.* VI in § 4.4 that the soul is wandering around (πλάνη) in the material world, before it reaches Nous. As we have seen in **T. 3.4** that reaching the paternal harbour means that the light of our soul is brought together with a special kind of light that surpasses the light of knowledge. It is this light for which Proclus prays in vss. 33-34, when he asks for holy light (φάος ἁγνόν), wisdom (σοφίην) and philosophical love that transports us to the palace of Zeus. The fact that this light is mentioned together with wisdom indicates that it is not the light of knowledge but the even more precious light of Nous, because in Proclus wisdom (*sophia*) is often opposed to discursive knowledge (*episteme*). It is the divine knowledge that stems from the contemplation of the Forms.

H. VI to the Mother of Gods, Hecate and Zeus too is a fine example of the theory of ascent put into practice. Hecate is invoked as standing before the door (προθύραιος). This is a telling epithet. Entities that are the first to proceed from a source are as it were posted in the porch of that source.[62] This is precisely the position of the leader-gods in relation to the Demiurge. In the hymn, Hecate is literally placed before Zeus,[63] for it is only after she has been hailed that Proclus turns towards him. We may observe here that just before **T. 3.4**, Proclus declares that the soul stands before the door of Nous (*In Tim.* I 301, 28f.: διὰ δὲ τῆς οἰκειώσεως εἰς τὴν θύραν καταστᾶσαν τοῦ πατρὸς ἑνωθῆναι πρὸς αὐτόν), before it is unified to it. As was the case with Athena, Proclus believed to have a special relationship with Hecate.[64] Once again Proclus presents himself as wandering around

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61 For this interpretation, see my commentary *ad loc.*
62 For a full discussion of the epithet, see my commentary *ad loc.*
63 This Zeus is the Demiurge, see § 2.3.
64 As Marinus testifies, see *Vita Procli* § 28 and my introduction to the hymn § 1.3.

in the material realm. In **T. 3.3** he compared such a soul to the wandering Odysseus. Although Odysseus is not named in vss. 10-12, they contain numerous reminiscences of the *Odyssey*, for which see my commentary. According to **T. 3.5**, only a life in accordance with Nous frees us from these wanderings and brings us to the mystical, i.e. paternal, harbour, to which Proclus refers in *H*. VI 12 as the harbour of piety (ὅρμον εὐσεβίης). It is 'precious light' (vs. 9: φάος ἐρίτιμον) that leads him out of the misery of the realm of *genesis*. I take this to be once again the light of Nous, which enables us to live in accordance with Nous, the only way to escape this world of matter (see **T. 3.5**).

H. I to Helios is without any doubt directed to a leader-god. *Theol. Plat.* VI c. 12 is entirely dedicated to Apollo/Helios. In the commentary on the hymn, we shall explore the correspondence between the hymn and this treatment. If any leader-god's powers of causation are evident to us mortals, they are those of the sun. Plato had already noted in his simile of the sun in the *Republic* that the sun is the cause of the existence of the whole realm of becoming, and Proclus celebrates these powers abundantly in the first seventeen verses of the hymn. Since the sun is to some extent the cause of everything in the universe,[65] everything reverts upon it. Helios 'shows and announces the noeric light to all inferior beings, fills all with complete truth and leads them to the Nous of the gods.'[66] This Nous is the Demiurge.[67] Contrary to *H*. VI and VII, Proclus does not explicitly pray to Helios to bring him to the paternal harbour. However, this request is implicitly present: Helios is asked to help Proclus in his function of uplifter of souls (vs. 34 ἀναγωγεὺς ψυχῶν). From the context it appears that Helios is supposed to lead the souls upwards to the palace of the Father, i.e. the Demiurge, about whom the souls have forgotten (vs. 32). Proclus prays to Helios for 'holy light rich in blessings' (vs. 40: φάος ἁγνὸν πολύολβον), which is supposed to scatter the cloud that prevents us from seeing the higher realities (vs.

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[65] Cf. *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 65, 1-3, where Proclus explains that *eudaimonia* belongs to all encosmic gods because they have one leader-god as their cause, i.e. the sun, 'for it is from this cause that perfection and blessedness flow towards all beings.'

[66] *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 61, 14-17: Τῆς τοίνυν Ἡλιακῆς τριάδος ἡ μὲν πρωτίστη μονὰς ἐκφαίνει τὸ νοερὸν φῶς καὶ ἐξαγγέλλει πᾶσι τοῖς δευτέροις καὶ πληροῖ πάντα τῆς ὅλης ἀληθείας καὶ ἀνάγει πρὸς τὸν νοῦν τὸν τῶν θεῶν…

[67] See *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 64, 26, where Helios appears to lead us to 'the universal Demiurge.'

41). This is the noeric light mentioned in the quotation from the *Theol. Plat.*

5. *Mania and the unification of the human soul*

5.1 *Mania and the triad of Truth, Beauty and Symmetry*

What then about the hymns to Aphrodite and to the Muses? These deities are not mentioned in the catalogue of leader-gods. As discussed above (§ 2.3), Aphrodite is a deity of the elevating triad of the hyper-encosmic gods, while the Muses are connected with Apollo, another god of that same triad. The hyper-encosmic class of gods hold the middle between the leader-gods and the encosmic gods and function as a link between them.[68] Among other things they cause all beings that are inferior to them to revert upon them and to stretch themselves out towards the noeric light.[69] They elevate the souls to their source.[70] Their elevating powers are especially brought to the fore in the elevating triad, the last one in the class of the hyper-encosmic gods.[71] The gods of this triad are, in descending order, Hermes, the patron deity of philosophy, who leads the souls up to the Good itself (ἀνάγει τὰς ψυχὰς ... ἐπ' αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθόν), Aphrodite, the goddess of love, who leads the souls to Beauty (τὸ καλόν) and Apollo, the divine musician, who draws the soul upwards to noeric Truth and the light there (πρὸς τὴν νοερὰν ἀνέλκων ἀλήθειαν καὶ τὸ ἐκεῖ φῶς). As we have already discussed in § 2.3, Aphrodite and the Muses in the hymns do just that. The former leads to Beauty, the latter are asked to draw Proclus' soul up to the noeric light.

The treatment of the elevating triad in *Theol. Plat.* VI is extremely brief. Proclus does not explain why he groups these gods together. True, they all possess elevating powers, but that goes for more gods. A passage at *Theol. Plat.* III 18, p. 63, 16-21 is revealing. Here Proclus connects the triad of the qualities which characterize the Good in *Phlb.* 65a2 — Truth (ἀλήθεια), Beauty (κάλλος), and Symmetry (συμμετρία) — with different types of life. Proclus links Truth with the philosopher, Beauty with the lover and Symmetry with the musician, the followers of respectively Hermes, Aphrodite and Apollo. Note

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68 *Theol. Plat.* VI 15, pp. 73, 13-74, 16.
69 *Theol. Plat.* VI 17, p. 83, 9-12.
70 *Theol. Plat.* VI 17, p. 83, 22f.
71 *Theol. Plat.* VI 22, p. 98, 14-24.

that here Truth is no longer associated with the musician but with the philosopher. The triad from the *Philebus* holds an important place in Proclus' philosophy, as is apparent from the fact that he wrote a monograph on this triad and a commentary on the *Philebus*, both now lost. As manifestations of the Good within the realm of Being, they direct the human soul towards the Good.[72]

Anne Sheppard 1980: 100 suggests that Proclus drew up a correlation between the three monads of Truth, Beauty and Symmetry and the types of life listed in *Phdr.* 248d that belong to those souls who enjoyed the best vision of Being before they were born. Moreover, she draws attention to the fact that he links this triad to the forms of madness (μανία) induced by the gods that are discussed in *Phdr.* 244a ff. These are the erotic madness, the prophetic madness and the poetic madness respectively. The link between Aphrodite and erotic madness on the one hand and Apollo and poetical madness on the other is evident. That leaves the mantic madness for Hermes and philosophy. We are indeed allowed to connect this madness with Hermes, for in *In RP.* I 178, 29-179, 2 Proclus connects prophetic madness with Truth, the monad to which Hermes leads up:

> **T. 3.6** In the same way as we say that prophetic madness exists according to Truth and erotic madness according to Beauty, so also we say that poetical madness is defined according to divine Symmetry.[73]

The anagogic triad, then, works by taking possession of someone. It is by means of this divine inspiration that the human soul surpasses its own limitations and is transported towards the divine. The divine madness comes especially to the fore in *H.* III 11: Proclus asks the Muses to make him a Bacchant (vs. 11) and let him feed on their honey (vs. 16), both traditional symbols for divine ecstasy (see commentary *ad loc.*).

5.2 *The relation between the leader-gods and the anagogic triad*

Sheppard 1980: 99ff. has drawn attention to the fact that Proclus, following Syrianus, connects the divinely inspired *maniai* with the

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[72] For Proclus' interpretation of the triad of divine qualities in the *Philebus*, see Combès 1987 and Van Riel 1997: 311-318.

[73] ὥσπερ οὖν κατὰ μὲν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν μαντικήν, κατὰ δὲ τὸ κάλλος τὴν ἐρωτικὴν μανίαν ὑφίστασθαι λέγομεν, οὕτως ἄρα καὶ κατὰ τὴν συμμετρίαν τὴν θείαν τὴν ποιητικὴν ἀφωρίσθαι φαμέν.

'one of the soul.'[74] The reason for this is that, as we have seen, the divine *maniai* lead to the triad of divine qualities: Truth, Beauty and Symmetry. Since these are qualities of the henads, i.e. the One in as far as we can participate in it, and since like can only be known by like, the divine *maniai* that lead us to them require necessarily the involvement of the 'one in us'.[75]

Now does this mean that Proclus aspires to be unified with the highest gods through these hymns? I do not think so. How could after all such humble gods as invoked in *H.* II, III, and V ever guide the soul to the top of the metaphysical hierarchy? Moreover, the hymns themselves do not suggest that Proclus requests this supreme mystical experience[76] from these gods. We should, I suggest, understand this against the background of Proclus' theory of emanation. The triad of Truth, Beauty, and Symmetry extends itself from the level of the henads throughout all levels of reality. The further downwards it manifests itself, the less powerful it is. Hence Aphrodite on the level of the hyper-encosmic gods cannot imbue us with the same erotic madness as Beauty itself can. All the same, she can inspire us to some degree with it, which is useful in the initial phase of our ascent for example to the level of Nous.

The hymns suggest that the activities of the leader-gods and the anagogic gods are related. This is most evident in the case of Helios and Apollo and his Muses. *H.* I is directed to the leader-god Helios. It appears that Apollo belongs to the series of Helios, i.e. that Helios causes Apollo (vss. 18-19). The Muses, in their turn, emanate from Apollo and thus also belong to the series of Helios. This explains why Proclus prays for poetical inspiration from the Muses in a hymn to Helios (vs. 44). On the other hand, the Muses inspire us with Bacchic frenzy (vs. 11), i.e. the contemplation of the intelligible on the level of Nous towards which the leader-god Helios elevates us.

In *H.* VII to the leader-goddess Athena, Proclus prays for things associated with Athena, like wisdom, but also for an *eros* strong

74 For the 'one of the soul' see § 3.

75 Cf. the discussion of *In Alc.* 247, 8-248, 4 in § 3 and *Providentia* § 31, 5ff. where the true madness (μανίαν ὡς ἀληθῶς θρυλλοῦσιν ἔνθεον) appears to be the 'unum anime' (one of the soul') by means of which we unite with the One (συναφθεῖσαν τῷ ἑνί). 'For everything is known by something similar' (πάντα γὰρ τῷ ὁμοίῳ γινώσκεται).

76 Mysticism is understood here as the 'belief in the possibility of an intimate and direct union of the human spirit with the fundamental principle of being, a union which constitutes at once a mode of existence and a mode of knowledge different from and superior to normal existence and knowledge' (Dodds 1965: 70).

enough to lift him up towards Nous (vss. 34-36). Perhaps *eros* is mentioned in a hymn to Athena because Athena may herself be said to be a goddess of love in some respect: the intellectual love for wisdom, that turns the philosopher away from the vices of the material world, see, e.g., vs. 18 where Athena is said to love (ἤραο) the power of virtue.

Given the fact that the elevating triad ranks below the leader-gods, I suggest that the forms of *mania* caused by the former constitute a phase preliminary to that of the elevation by the leader-gods towards the divine Nous. At both levels, however, the same forces are at work, like that of Love in case of Aphrodite and Athena, and that of divine Symmetry or harmony in case of the Muses and Helios. Ultimately, these forces may lead us to such monads as Beauty and Truth, but long before that point hymns will have ceased to be functional. Hymns consist after all of *logoi*, the means of expression on the level of discursive intellect.

6. *Conclusions*

In the extant hymns, Proclus addresses two different groups of gods: anagogic gods who induce divine madness in the human soul, and the leader-gods who lead up towards divine Nous. Both groups of gods rank relatively low in the divine hierarchy. The latter group of gods emanate from the Demiurge or divine Nous. The divine Nous contains all causes in a unified manner. In the case of the leader-gods, these causes emanate from the Demiurge and become split up. Each leader-god is the cause of a whole series. Since all members of such a series share the same cause, they have something in common with each other and with their cause. It is for that reason that the leader-gods are characterized by likeness (ὁμοιότης). We shall come back to this in the next chapter, because likeness will appear to be the pivotal element in the theurgical rites of which the hymns are a part. For the moment, let it suffice to note that, thanks to our relation to these causes, we may together with these leader-gods return towards the divine Nous. This return to Nous is sometimes described as reaching the paternal harbour, a formulation echoed in the hymns. To reach this state of being in Nous was of particular importance for Proclus, for it constitutes an important step in his mysticism. Being united with Nous lends a greater degree of unity to

the human soul and hence it becomes more divine. Perhaps even more important, it helps us to escape the 'wing of Fate', i.e. the cycle of rebirth in the realm of matter. The hymns directed towards leader-gods are *H.* I, VI and VII.

H. II, III and V invoke deities which Plato associated with divine madness, Aphrodite and the Muses. These gods rank below the leader-gods, but they appear to be somehow connected to the triad of Truth, Beauty and Symmetry from the *Phlb.* In my interpretation, this does not mean that these hymns are supposed to bring Proclus there directly, but rather that they inspire him with upward-leading powers which will eventually bring him there, but not before he has passed through subsequent other divine realms, including that of the leader-gods. In fact, as we have seen, the leader-gods inspire the human soul with the same kind of erotic and poetical madness as Aphrodite and the Muses do.

We have left the gods of *H.* IV out of the discussion because their nature cannot be determined. All the same, they fit into the general picture sketched above. In the introduction to *H.* IV, I shall argue that this hymn is a prayer for an inspired study of secret texts, not unlike *H.* III to the Muses. The gods invoked are celebrated as the gods of *sophia*, wisdom. Wisdom is the mode of knowledge of Nous and once we partake in it, we function like it.[77] If they lead us towards wisdom, this implies that they bring us towards an existence according to Nous. This is brought out by the last verse of the hymn, in which Proclus asks the gods to reveal to him the ὄργια καὶ τελετάς of the holy *mythoi.* This formulation calls into mind *Phdr.* 250b8-c1: when the souls contemplated the Form of Beauty, they were ushered into the most blessed of all mysteries (ἐτελοῦντο τῶν τελετῶν μακαριωτάτην) which we celebrated (ὠργιάζομεν).[78] As we have seen above, Proclus consistently links this image of mystic rites from the *Phaedrus* to the contemplation of the Forms on the level of Nous.

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[77] *Theol. Plat.* I 25, p. 109, 17-8: … τὴν θείαν σοφίαν, ἧς καὶ ὁ νοῦς πληρούμενος γινώσκει τὰ ὄντα καὶ ψυχαὶ μετέχουσαι νοερῶς ἐνεργοῦσιν…

[78] *Phdr.* 250b8-c1: ἐτελοῦντο τῶν τελετῶν ἣν θέμις λέγειν μακαριωτάτην, ἣν ὠργιάζομεν κτλ.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE THEORY BEHIND THEURGY

1. *Introduction*

In the previous chapter (III § 4.1) we have seen that with Iamblichus Neoplatonic psychology underwent an important change. From now on, the human self was confined to the level of Soul and no longer rooted in the realm of Nous. As an important consequence we noted the fact that the contemplation of the Forms was thus placed outside the reach of the human soul proper, as well as all other divine entities above the level of Soul, and that consequently the Neoplatonists put their trust in theurgy in order to obtain divine help to overcome the limitations of the human soul. In the next two chapters we shall explore the nature of theurgy in relation to Proclus' hymns. My main objective will be to show that Proclus' hymns are part of theurgical — or hieratic, as it is sometimes called — practice and as such represent an essential part of the Neoplatonic philosophical life.

There is a novel element in my approach. Admittedly, many scholars have mentioned the fact that the hymns abound with Chaldaean, i.e. theurgical, idiom[1] or are even directed to Chaldaean deities.[2] To the best of my knowledge, however, no one has ever systematically studied the hymns as examples of theurgical practice. A double benefit will be derived from this approach. On the one hand, it will enhance our understanding of the hymns. On the other, such a reading of the hymns will shed light on Proclus' attitude towards theurgy. Until now, discussions of this subject have contented themselves with the treatment of Proclus' remarks about theurgy. I think that the hymns put us in a position to compare theory to practice. One would expect the latter to foster understanding of the former and thus of Proclus' attitude in general.

This chapter deals with the theory of theurgy in general: what was theurgy? How was it supposed to work and what to achieve? What kind of gods did it involve and up to which level in the divine

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[1] See e.g. Vogt 1957 *apparatus fontium*.

[2] As *H.* IV is supposed to be, but see my introduction to the hymn.

hierarchy did it function? In the next chapter, we shall examine to what extent Proclus' hymns may be considered as part of his theurgical activities.

2. *Theurgy: the origins*

There was theurgy before there was Neoplatonism. This paragraph intends to sketch theurgy in its own right, before the Neoplatonists adopted and adapted it. The founders of theurgy are father and son Julian. *Suda* calls the former 'Chaldaean' and the 'philosopher', whereas the latter, who lived under the reign of Marcus Aurelius, is called the 'theurgist'.[3] Their reputation soon grew to mythical proportions, which led even a great scholar like H. Lewy astray, only to be deflated by H. D. Saffrey.[4] To sum up his findings: There existed a collection of oracles and magical rites, to which Julian the father as a Chaldaean (magician) had access. He was, however, not just a magician but took also interest in the (Middle) Platonism of his day, hence the epithet 'philosopher'. Through the intermediary of his son, who acted as a medium, he caused oracles to be given by Plato himself. The Chaldaean Oracles, the holy scripture of the theurgists, were a mixture of the older Chaldaean oracles and the newer ones given a Platonist colouring by the two Julians.

The precise meaning of the word θεουργία is much debated. Contrary to θεολογία, it is not just a matter of speaking about the divine, but also involves action. The question is what kind of action we should think of. Some have suggested that the theurgist operated on the gods. Others suppose that he made θεοί, i.e. that the theurgist had the power to make a god out of a man, or at least made him godlike. As we shall see, this is how the Neoplatonists were to understand the works of the theurgist. On the other hand, it has been stressed that these interpretations cast the human theurgist in an active role, whereas, if theurgy was to function, the gods themselves could not remain passive. Thus we obtain the interpretation of theurgy as 'action of the divine' which the theurgist tried to procure from the gods.[5]

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[3] *Suda* Ἰουλιανός (433 and 434).

[4] Saffrey 1981[a]: 210-220, criticizing Lewy 1978: 3-4.

[5] For a survey of the different interpretations of the word theurgy, see Blumenthal 1993[c], who himself tries to uncover the origins of the word. The interpretation

In any case the theurgist tried to summon forth the gods. This could take different forms. The god could manifest him or herself in a statue (ἄγαλμα) or in a medium.[6] The god, who was thus present, then answered the questions of the theurgists by means of oracles. They took the form, as oracles often did in Antiquity, of hexameters in a sort of archaic Homeric Greek, which gave them a solemn and elevated ring. Concerning these oracles it should be noted that our collection of them is the result of the arduous attempts of modern scholars, beginning with W. Kroll's edition in 1894, to flesh them out of later, especially neoplatonic, texts in which they were quoted.[7] These oracles are our prime source for the reconstruction of theurgy. However, the mutilated form in which they have come down to us, as well as the fact that the Neoplatonists who quote them usually cite them in the context of a neoplatonic interpretation, greatly impedes the attempts to do so. In this respect, the study of the oracles is comparable to the study of the Presocratics. Only fragments and testimonies survive in later philosophers. Regrettably, the context in which the latter quote them more often than not obscures rather than clarifies the actual meaning of the fragments.[8] Hans Lewy's monumental study *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy. Mysticism Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*, which first appeared posthumously in 1956 and later in a reworked and augmented second edition in 1978 edited by M. Tardieu, offers us such a reconstruction. Although on-going research has brought to light new testimonies and has corrected and qualified some of Lewy's findings, the work is still indispensable for the student of theurgy.

In the context of a study of Proclus' hymns, we should pay attention to this situation. As we shall see in the commentary section, Proclus' hymns abound with expressions from the Chaldaean oracles.

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of theurgy as 'action of the divine' is argued for by Majercik 1989: 22 and Smith 1974: 100 (discussing Iamblichus' concept of theurgy): 'Men are involved in the operation of ritual on divine actions, but it is the divine which achieves results.'

6 For the evidence of the procedure, which is known as the 'binding' and 'loosing' of a god, see Lewy 1978[2]: 41f. and Majercik 1989: 27-29.

7 Des Places' edition in the Budé-series (1996[3]) is now the standard. Helpful is also the edition with commentary and English translation by Majercik 1989.

8 For the problems facing a scholar working on the oracles, cf. Lewy 1978: 74-6, who concludes: 'If the task of its (sc. the Chaldaean Oracles, RMB) interpreter is often ungrateful, and if the problem he sets out to solve sometimes seems to partake of the nature of a jigsaw puzzle, the reason is to be sought in the fragmentary character of the tradition and in the necessity of keeping in check the constant temptation to adopt the Neoplatonic explanations.'

However, since we lack an independent tradition, we are only able to recognize Chaldaean expressions in so far as Proclus and other Neoplatonist who cite the oracles have passed them down to us. In a prose text we can sometimes recognize a (part of a) Chaldaean oracle, even when it is not labelled as such, thanks to the fact that the oracles are hexameters in mock archaic Greek, and thus recognizably different from philosophical prose. However, since Proclus' hymns also consist of hexameters in a kind of archaic Greek, we cannot recognize references to the oracles in them, unless Proclus or someone else has quoted them elsewhere as being such. To give an example: there is no way to tell whether the rare adjective ἀρσενόθυμος in *H.* VII 3 has been borrowed from the oracles or not. Therefore we can never hope to fully map the influence of the Chaldaean oracles on Proclus' hymns. Moreover, the interpretation of references to the oracles in Proclus' hymns is somewhat problematic. Since Proclus reads the oracles through his Neoplatonic spectacles, our task is to try to uncover the Neoplatonic significance Proclus attached to these expressions, not to determine the original meaning.

The oracles provided the theurgists with precious knowledge of the divine world. They taught them how the divine world was structured, which god to contact, how to do it, and what use to put this contact to.[9] As a result, the theurgist was a master in what we would call 'white magic' (magic for beneficent ends), like rainmaking in times of drought,[10] preventing earthquakes[11] and healings.[12] Impressive though these miracles might be in their own right, they were only of secondary importance in comparison to the real benefit to be derived from the practice of theurgy: the salvation of the human soul. The Chaldaean oracles preach the pessimistic view of the soul/body relation set out in Plato's *Phaedo.* The human soul originates from the divine intelligible world, but has descended into the realm of matter. Most souls forget their origins completely and become wholly engulfed by the world of matter. As a result, they die with a soul stained by matter and are not allowed to ascend towards the intelligible world, but are dragged off to Hades by daemons. Those souls,

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9 For a map of the Chaldaean system, see, e.g., Lewy 1978: 67-176, Des Places 1996³: 13-15, Dillon 1977: 393-395, Majercik 1989: 5-16.

10 As for example Julian *fils* is reported to have done during the campaign of Marcus Aurelius against the Macromans, see Lewy 1978: 4. Saffrey 1981ᶜ: 213f., though, ascribes the miracle to Marcus Aurelius himself.

11 As Nestorius did in the case of Athens, cf. Zosimus IV 18, 2.

12 On this aspect of the theurgy, see Lewy 1978: 216.

however, who have been so fortunate as to go through the theurgical initiations, are cleansed and after death allowed to take their place in the intelligible realm (cf. chapter III § 3: the escape from the 'Wing of Fate'). These rituals were of course supposed to be kept secret, and as a result not much is known about them.[13] We know that, somehow or other, the sun played an important role in the initiation process: the initiate was supposed to be led up through the rays of the sun towards the sun itself, thus obtaining purification. We shall come back to this part of the Chaldaean initiation in our discussion of Proclus' hymn to the sun.

The working principle behind theurgy is the concept of cosmic *sympatheia*. Certain animals, stones, plants and names were supposed to be sympathetic to a certain deity. If handled properly during the invocation of a god, these σύμβολα or συνθήματα would attract the deity invoked. As Dodds notes, the use of these symbols was far from original. Testimonies of their pivotal role in Greco-Egyptian magic are numerous.[14] Nor was the philosophical interest in the phenomenon of *sympatheia* restricted to the Neoplatonists, as the example of Posidonius shows.[15] As we shall see below, this idea was to have a profound influence on Proclus' thinking and helps to explain much of what is going on in the hymns.

3. *Iamblichus and the introduction of theurgy in Neoplatonism*

Since the Chaldaean oracles partly went back to Middle Platonism, they were easily made compatible with Neoplatonism. However, compatibility is no guarantee for incorporation, and Plotinus indeed remains silent about the Chaldaean oracles and theurgy.[16] Porphyry accepts theurgy, but has only a limited use for it as a way to purify the lower part of the human soul, while attacking those, notably Iamblichus, who give an overriding importance to it.[17] There must have been more of such thinkers. In the often quoted words of Damascius:

[13] On this ritual, see Lewy 1978: 176-226, and Majercik 1989: 30-46 for a critical assesment of Lewy's reconstruction and those by others.

[14] Dodds 1947: 63.

[15] For Posidonius on *sympatheia* see especially F106 ed. Edelstein-Kidd (=Cicero *De Divinatione* II 33-5) with the comments by Kidd 1988: 423-425.

[16] It seems probable, though, that he perused the *Chaldaean Oracles* at some stage of his career, as Dillon 1992 argues.

[17] For Porphyry's views on theurgy, see especially Smith 1974.

T. 4.1 To some philosophy is primary, as to Porphyry and Plotinus and a great many other philosophers; to others hieratic practice, as to Iamblichus, Syrianus, Proclus, and the hieratic school generally (trans. Westerink).[18]

As this quotation reveals, things changed with the appearance of Iamblichus[19] (late third, early fourth century, exact dates unknown).[20] He assigned a new role to theurgy. It should not just cleanse parts of our soul, as Porphyry had it, but help us to ascend. This new role of theurgy was prompted by the aforementioned controversy between Plotinus and Porphyry on the one hand and Iamblichus and the later Neoplatonists on the other about the question whether or not the human soul descends entirely, as was discussed in chapter III § 4.1.

Iamblichus defended the use of theurgy in the process of ascent against Porphyry in a work now passing under the erroneous title *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum* (*Myst.*), which it was given by its first translator Ficino. In fact it is only a small section of the treatise that deals with Egyptian ritual as an exponent of theurgy. A scholion[21] offers the correct title: *Answer of master Abamon to the letter of Porphyry to Anebo and solutions to the problems raised in that letter* (Ἀβάμωνος διδασκάλου πρὸς τὴν Πορφυρίου πρὸς Ἀνεβὼ ἐπιστολὴν ἀπόκρισις καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ ἀπορημάτων λύσεις).[22] According to the scholion, Proclus in his commentary on the *Enneads* noted that Abamon was really a *nom de plume* of Iamblichus. The work was to become a manifesto for all the Neoplatonists who valued ritual theurgy over contemplative philosophy, Proclus included. The latter had evidently read the *De Mysteriis*, as the scholion shows.

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[18] Damascius *In Phd.* I § 172 ed. Westerink: Ὅτι οἱ μὲν τὴν φιλοσοφίαν προτιμῶσιν, ὡς Πορφύριος καὶ Πλωτῖνος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ φιλόσοφοι· οἱ δὲ τὴν ἱερατικήν, ὡς Ἰάμβλιχος καὶ Συριανὸς καὶ Πρόκλος καὶ οἱ ἱερατικοὶ πάντες.

[19] Iamblichus' views on theurgy and its relation to philosophy have recently been discussed in three monographs, all worth mentioning, Nasemann 1991, Shaw 1995, and Clarke 1999. Unfortunately Shaw does not take Nasemann's fine study into account. Also useful for the understanding of Iamblichus views on theurgy are Zintzen 1983 and Smith 1974: 83-99.

[20] On Iamblichus' life, see Dillon 1987: 862-875.

[21] Des Places 1989²: 38, the scholion is probably by Pselllus as Sicherl has argued. For an extensive treatment of the attribution of *Myst.* to Iamblichus and the value of the aforementioned scholion in that discussion, see now Nasemann 1991: 13-24.

[22] The spelling of the name with double μ, although frequent in editions, is a conjecture that can be traced back to Gale's edition, as Clarke 1999: 26f. shows.

According to Iamblichus, theurgy brings about the elevation of the human soul to the gods and their subsequent union with them. Porphyry takes this to imply that the theurgist as an inferior being tries to *force* the gods into doing things. He thus accuses Iamblichus of being an impious magician, for magic as opposed to pious worship is characterized by *Götterzwang*. Iamblichus is at pains to deny this accusation, as is illustrated by the following quotation:

> **T. 4.2** It is because of such a will (i.e. the free will of the gods to do good to the theurgists, RMB), that the gods, being gracious and propitious, illuminate the theurgists ungrudgingly; they call the souls of the theurgists upwards to themselves and furnish them with an union with themselves, accustoming them, although they are still in a body, to detaching themselves from it and to turning towards their eternal and noetic principle.[23]

This could be a summary of what takes place in Proclus' hymns: purification, i.e. detachment from the body, followed by *anagoge* leading towards illumination, which comes finally down to unification, in the case of Proclus' hymns notably with the Demiurge and Beauty.

Iamblichus here drives forcefully home the point that the gods willingly fulfil the prayers of the theurgist for illumination. They do so according to their free will ungrudgingly (διὰ βουλήσεως ἀφθόνως), because they are gracious and propitious (εὐμενεῖς ὄντες καὶ ἵλεῳ). Theurgy, according to Iamblichus, is not based on force exercised by humans over the gods, but on love (φιλία).[24] It is not the emotional love to which mortals may fall victim — the perfect gods have no such things as emotions — but the love of the creating gods for their creatures. Proclus too, as will appear, believes that it is this causative relationship which underlies theurgy. Theurgy stimulates this love by means of symbols, about which we shall speak further below. The theurgist, by stimulating these feelings of love, does not use force but persuasion (πειθώ).[25] Proclus, as we shall see in the next chapter, uses these terms to describe prayer, without however elaborating on them as Iamblichus does here.

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23 *Myst.* I 12 (41, 4-11): Διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης οὖν βουλήσεως ἀφθόνως οἱ θεοὶ τὸ φῶς ἐπιλάμπουσιν εὐμενεῖς ὄντες καὶ ἵλεῳ τοῖς θεουργοῖς, τάς τε ψυχὰς αὐτῶν εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἀνακαλούμενοι καὶ τὴν ἕνωσιν αὐταῖς τὴν πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς χορηγοῦντες, ἐθίζοντές τε αὐτὰς καὶ ἔτι ἐν σώματι οὔσας ἀφίστασθαι τῶν σωμάτων, ἐπὶ δὲ τὴν ἀίδιον καὶ νοητὴν αὐτῶν ἀρχὴν περιάγεσθαι.

24 *Myst.* I 12 (42, 7-9).

25 On theurgy as persuasion of the will of the gods, see e.g. Zintzen 1983 and Nasemann 1991: 123-128.

For Iamblichus it is *philia* instead of *sympatheia* that connects us to the gods. He distinguishes between the two. He understands sympathy as a power at work within the material cosmos only, whereas the divine love surpasses the limits of the cosmos and ties the material cosmos to the divine, noetic one. In Proclus, however, sympathy is taken in a wider sense and is equated with divine love. Iamblichus had good reason to make this somewhat artificial distinction. Plotinus had explained magic in terms of cosmic sympathy, and so did Plotinus' student and Iamblichus' opponent Porphyry. Therefore Iamblichus, in his attempts to vindicate theurgy, did not want to associate it with sympathy in any way whatsoever. By Proclus' time, the advocates of theurgy had carried the day, and he did not feel the need to avoid the term 'sympathy'. He uses it as an equivalent of the Iamblichean *philia* (a term also used by Proclus) between causes and effects at different levels of reality, not as the magic cosmic sympathy which Iamblichus had sought to exclude.[26]

As Iamblichus explains, illumination and unification cannot be obtained through contemplative philosophy as advocated by Plotinus. The unification with the gods is the work of the gods, 'for thinking does not link the theurgists with the gods. For, if so, what would prevent those who philosophize theoretically (τοὺς θεωρητικῶς φιλοσοφοῦντας) from experiencing the theurgical unification (τὴν θεουργικὴν ἕνωσιν) with the gods?'[27] Iamblichus argues that if our thinking would indeed stimulate the divine to unify itself with us, the inferior would act on the superior. This is against the rules of nature.[28] Something surpassing mere rational thinking by far (ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν νόησιν) could not be brought about by philosophizing. Iamblichus here cashes in the consequences of his rejection of Plotinian psychology. In Plotinus' theory, unification with the gods of the world of Nous meant unification with what one is, at least partially, oneself. However, since Iamblichus downgrades the nature of the human soul, contact with the gods becomes contact with superior beings. He is thus able to turn the tables on Porphyry. It is the theoretical philosopher who as an inferior being seeks to manipulate the gods, just as a magician would have done.

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[26] On the difference between cosmic sympathy and divine love, see Iamblichus *Myst.* V 7 and 9. This difference is discussed in e.g. Smith 1974: 90ff. and Nasemann 1991: 123-128.

[27] *Myst.* II 11 (96, 14-16).

[28] *Myst.* II 11 (97, 9-11).

In the case of theurgy, on the contrary, the gods are moved not by means of our inferior thought but by means of their own συνθήματα:

> **T. 4.3** For in fact, even when we do not think, the signs themselves of their own accord do their characteristic work, and the ineffable power of the gods, to whom these signs belong, recognizes of its own accord its proper images, but not because it is woken up by our thinking.[29]

So, for Iamblichus, theurgy was ultimately about unification with the gods and it was obtained by means of the divine συνθήματα. These symbols may be a variety of things. He mentions material symbols[30] like 'an animal or a plant here on earth, which preserves the intention of its creator in an unmixed and pure fashion,'[31] stones and aromatic substances,[32] but also symbolic pictures, names and musical compositions[33] and numbers.[34] These signs originate from the gods who respond to them of their own accord. The theurgist, then, does not force the gods to do anything.

Contemplative philosophy fell short of achieving exactly this unification. That is not to say that philosophy was completely discarded. Iamblichus is after all justly noted as a philosopher, and an important one at that. He maintained philosophy as an auxiliary cause (συναίτιον), a requirement for receiving the illumination brought about by theurgy, along with such things like a good disposition of the human soul (τὰς ὅλας τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρίστας διαθέσεις) and purification (τὴν περὶ ἡμᾶς καθαρότητα).[35] In his interpretation, theurgy was not so much about *working on* the gods as *making* gods, i.e. turning men into gods by means of unification of the former with the latter. In this way, he hoped to reach the goal of all Platonic philosophy: to become like god.[36]

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[29] *Myst.* II 11 (97, 4-9): Καὶ γὰρ μὴ νοούντων ἡμῶν αὐτὰ τὰ συνθήματα ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν δρᾷ τὸ οἰκεῖον ἔργον, καὶ ἡ τῶν θεῶν, πρὸς οὓς ἀνήκει ταῦτα, ἄρρητος δύναμις αὐτὴ ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς ἐπιγιγνώσκει τὰς οἰκείας εἰκόνας, ἀλλ' οὐ τῷ διεγείρεσθαι ὑπὸ τῆς ἡμετέρας νοήσεως·

[30] For a discussion of Iamblichus and Proclus on material symbols, see Shaw 1995: 162-169.

[31] *Myst.* V 9 (209, 15-17), see Nasemann 1991: 129-131 for a discussion of this passage.

[32] *Myst.* V 23 (233, 11-14: ἡ θεουργικὴ τέχνη ... συμπλέκει πολλάκις λίθους βοτάνας ζῷα ἀρώματα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα ἱερὰ καὶ τέλεια καὶ θεοειδῆ ...

[33] On these symbols, see Shaw 1995: 170-188.

[34] On numbers as theurgical symbols, see Shaw 1995: 189-215.

[35] *Myst.* II 11 (97, 13-17).

[36] See e.g. *Myst.* I 15 (48): we obtain likeness to god by means of theurgical contact with him (καὶ τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸ (sc. the deity) ὁμοιότητα ἀπὸ τοῦ συνεχῶς αὐτῷ προσομιλεῖν κτώμεθα).

4. *Proclus and the continuation of theurgy in Neoplatonism*

4.1 *Introduction*

Iamblichus' influence on the Athenian Neoplatonists can hardly be overestimated and Proclus does not conceal his debt to the Syrian master. This holds especially true in the field of theurgy. As Damascius noted in **T. 4.1**, Proclus followed Iamblichus in the promotion of theurgy over philosophy. A point in case for Iamblichus' influence will be Proclus' theory of theurgical prayer, to be analysed in the next chapter, which he borrows straight from Iamblichus. If one wishes to understand Proclus' ideas about theurgy properly, one could hardly do without some knowledge of Iamblichus. It is obvious that Proclus too was firmly convinced that mere philosophizing could not lead up the soul to union with the gods and that it had to take recourse to theurgy, although I do not claim that Proclus' ideas about theurgy are exactly the same as those of Iamblichus.[37] Let us therefore now examine Proclus' relation to theurgy.

4.2 *Proclus the theurgist*

Proclus' passion for theurgy is clear both from his own writings and his biography written by Marinus. The latter even dedicates a whole chapter to Proclus' theurgical excellence. He was initiated into the Chaldaean wisdom by Asclepigenia, the granddaughter of Nestorius. Apparently, this was a gradual process:

> **T. 4.4** [T]he philosopher was cleansed by the Chaldaean purification; then he held converse, as he himself mentions in one of his works,[38] with the luminous apparitions of Hecate, which he saw with his own eyes; then he caused rainfalls by correctly moving the *iunx*;[39] by this means he saved Attica from a severe drought. He proposed means to prevent earthquakes; he tested the divinatory power of the tripod; and even uttered verses about his own destiny.[40]

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[37] Sheppard 1982: 214 rightly reproaches Smith for assuming too readily that Proclus' and Iamblichus' views on the matter are essentially the same. The point is especially driven home in the stimulating study by Clarke 1999.

[38] The work mentioned does not survive.

[39] A kind of magical instrument, described by Psellus as a golden sphere embedded with a sapphire and swung around by means of a leather strap, on which see further Majercik 1989: 30.

[40] Marinus *Vita Procli* § 28, trans. after Rosán 1949: 29: ὁ φιλόσοφος τοῖς Χαλδαικοῖς καθαρμοῖς καθαιρόμενος, φάσμασι μὲν Ἑκατικοῖς φωτοειδέσιν αὐτοπτουμένοις ὡμίλησεν, ὡς καὶ αὐτός που μέμνηται ἐν ἰδίῳ συγγράμματι. ὄμβρους τε ἐκίνησεν,

Marinus then continues to quote two samples of these verses which foretell the beautiful destiny awaiting Proclus' soul after this life. Apart from these and other miracles performed by Proclus (among which healings were especially important), Marinus also informs us that Proclus was an eager student of the Chaldaean Oracles. He started studying them under the guidance of Syrianus, who unfortunately died soon after the course had started. This did not stop Proclus from studying the works by Porphyry and Iamblichus on the Oracles and other related Chaldaean writings. As a result of his study over a period of five years he managed in the end to produce a commentary on the Oracles (Marinus *Vita Procli* § 26).

It is not clear whether the fragments of the writings by Proclus on the Oracles which have come down to us belong to the product of this five years labour. We have two opuscula which deal with theurgy only: a collection of five fragments on the philosophy of the Chaldaeans, entitled in the manuscripts Πρόκλου ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς χαλδαικῆς φιλοσοφίας (*Chal. Phil.*)[41] and a fragment entitled Περὶ τῆς καθ' Ἕλληνας ἱερατικῆς τέχνης,[42] also known under the Latin title, given to it by Ficino, *Opus Procli de sacrificio et magia* (*De Sacrificio*).[43] To my mind, the former work could well be part of the commentary Marinus reported about in the *Vita*. The latter work deals especially with the powers of *sympatheia* and symbols. We shall look at this work in greater detail below. In the rest of Proclus' *œuvre* too, we find numerous references to theurgy and the Chaldaean oracles.[44]

4.3 *Anne Sheppard on Proclus' attitude to theurgy*

Preventing earthquakes is one thing, unification with the gods is another. Neoplatonists may bring both activities under the heading

ἴυγγά τινα προσφόρως κινήσας, καὶ αὐχμῶν ἐξαισίων τὴν Ἀττικὴν ἠλευθέρωσεν. φυλακτήριά τε σεισμῶν κατετίθετο καὶ τῆς τοῦ τρίποδος μαντικῆς ἐνεργείας ἐπειράθη, περί τε τῆς αὐτοῦ λήξεως στίχους ἐξέβαλεν.

[41] Text, translation and notes given by Des Places 1996^3: 202-212, who also lists previous editions (p. 202).

[42] Edition of the Greek text in Bidez 1928: 139-151, partial translation by Festugière 1944: 134-136.

[43] It should be noted that the Latin title is a somewhat unhappy one, because Iamblichus goes in *Myst.* to some lengths to show that theurgy is not magic, the difference being that the magician claims to force the divine to work for him, whereas in the case of the theurgist, the gods collaborate willingly.

[44] For a list of Proclus references to the theurgical ritual, see Lewy 1978: 495-6 (Excursus X) and Sheppard 1982: 218-222 for references to Proclus' attitude towards theurgy in his writings.

of theurgy, but one cannot help feeling that these are two quite distinct activities, however much they may depend on the same techniques of attracting the gods by means of symbols. Consequently, scholars tend to distinguish between a lower, i.e. more material, and a higher, i.e. more spiritual, kind of theurgy in Proclus. A similar distinction seems also to apply to Iamblichus.[45] To my mind this is an important distinction in the context of the hymns. Therefore, I shall now pause to discuss it.

The contribution of Anne Sheppard (1982) to the debate about lower and higher forms of theurgy in Proclus takes the foregoing discussion into account, as well as texts hitherto left out of consideration. It therefore provides a good starting-point for the present discussion. She distinguishes between three sorts of theurgy. The lowest form of theurgy she equates with white magic, surely a somewhat an unhappy term in the light of Iamblichus' attempts in *Myst.* to deny that theurgy has anything to do with magic. This lowest form of theurgy is concerned with operations in the material world. The miracles performed by Proclus mentioned in **T. 4.4** come under this heading. The theurgical rites of this kind pertain to the affairs of human life, but there is no suggestion that Proclus used these rites to induce mystical experience.[46]

Sheppard then proceeds to distinguish two other types of theurgy. In this, she introduces a new element, for in discussions up till then people tended to distinguish between just two types of theurgy in Proclus. The next two types of theurgy are to be distinguished from white magic, because they are directed towards the ascent of the human soul, whereas white magic is not. Sheppard suggests that Proclus therefore did not regard this white magic of much importance.

The task of the second type of theurgy is to unify the soul at the level of Nous and make it thus noerically active. It takes the ascending human soul as far as the point where the noetic world joins the noetic-and-noeric world.[47] According to Sheppard, it is not clear whether this form of theurgy implies rites and if so, which sort of rituals we should be thinking of. She guesses that these rituals, if any, are purifying ones.

We can induce some evidence from *Theol. Plat.* IV for the fact that there is indeed theurgy up till that level and that it entails more than

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[45] See for Iamblichus Smith 1974: 83-99.
[46] Sheppard 1982: 223.
[47] Sheppard 1982: 221.

just purifying rites. In the first half of *Theol. Plat.* IV, Proclus discusses the gods on the level of Life, i.e. the noetic-and-noeric gods. In his discussion of the ascent of the human soul through their realm, he refers to a Chaldaean ritual, in which the body of the initiate is to be buried with the exception of his head during the most secret part the of initiations.[48] Smith takes this to be an indication that Proclus still allows some form of theurgical rite at higher levels.[49] Sheppard again argues that this only shows that the theurgists and Plato hold the same metaphysical views.[50] However, at the end of his treatment of the noetic-and-noeric gods, Proclus prays to these noetic-and-noeric gods that they may initiate him in their mysteries, 'illuminating me not by means of words but through theurgical rites' (οὐ λόγοις ἀλλ' ἔργοις φωτίσαντες).[51] Thus I think it highly unlikely that Proclus refers to the burial rite just for the sake of pointing out the parallelism between Plato and the theurgists. Be this as it may, it shows that there is even still ritual theurgy at the level of the noetic-and-noeric gods and moreover that at this level the theurgical ritual involved does more than just cleanse us. It also illuminates.

The last and highest type of theurgy is the one that brings about the mystical union with the One, sometimes described as assimilation with the Father (*Chal. Phil.* Fr. 2, p. 207, 24, cf. chapter II § 3.1). The 'one in us' contacts the one of the gods (see chapter III § 3). It functions as a theurgical *symbolon*.

Sheppard is convinced that this form of theurgy leaves all ritual behind it. She presents this as something that is very likely,[52] but in fact we can be absolutely sure. Proclus says so in as many words in *Chal. Phil.* Fr. 2 p. 207, 17ff. There he cautions us not to think that we please the Father 'with an empty storm of spoken words nor with a fantasy of (ritual) acts embellished with art.'[53] The only form of true worship of him consists in unification with him, thus positively denying any function to ritual. To this we may add the evidence of *In Crat.* § 71, p. 32, 29f., already pointed out by Sheppard herself[54] and

48 *Theol. Plat.* IV 9, p. 30, 17ff.

49 Smith 1974: 116.

50 Sheppard 1982: 222.

51 *Theol. Plat.* IV 26, p. 77, 23, for the identification of the with theurgic mysteries, see Saffrey-Westerink additional n. 6 to p. 77 on p. 172.

52 Sheppard 1982: 221: 'There is no clear indication in Proclus that it was external theurgic rites which were used to activate the 'one in the soul' in this way.'

53 μὴ οὖν κενῇ ῥημάτων καταιγίδι πείσειν ἐλπίζωμεν τὸν λόγων ἀληθῶν δεσπότην μηδὲ ἔργων φαντασίᾳ μετὰ τέχνης κεκαλλωπισμένων

54 Sheppard 1982: 221.

discussed at chapter V § 3.4.3, which seems to imply that ritual theurgy only works up to the level of the noetic-and-noeric gods.

I agree with Sheppard's tripartite division of Proclean theurgy, although it needs a qualification. In the next chapter, I hope to show that Proclus' hymns may be understood as theurgical devices. If so, this fact will shed new light on our understanding of theurgy. As I have argued in the previous chapter, most of the hymns aim at unification with Nous, which corresponds to the second type of theurgy in Sheppard's division. In that case, we would have discovered an example of the second type of theurgy. We could then know that the second type involved ritual, which may have included purifying rites, but certainly hymns. Note, however, that the hymns cover only a part of this type of theurgy, since it elevates us up to the noetic-and-noeric domain, far past Nous.

4.4 *Proclus on symbols*

As we have seen in this chapter so far, the essential ingredient in the theurgical ritual, both as conceived in pre-Neoplatonic theurgy and in theurgy as conceived by Iamblichus, are symbols (σύμβολα or συνθήματα). The same goes for Proclus. I now intend to show that there is a special relation between the leader-gods, i.e. the gods to whom most hymns are dedicated, and the theurgical symbols. In order to demonstrate this, I shall now focus on what Proclus has to say about symbols.

What is a symbol for Proclus? It is something immaterial which marks someone or something as the product of a cause. These causes, which are the gods of Proclus' metaphysical system, are situated at the various levels of reality and even seem to include the One itself.[55] It is due to such symbols that we are able to return to the causes of which we bear the symbols. Sometimes Proclus also uses the term to designate something which, since it contains such a mark, can be used in the theurgical ritual to attract the god who is its cause. Thus, both a certain man and a certain stone may have the sun as their cause. Of the man we will say that he has an immaterial symbol of the sun engraved in his soul. The stone too contains such an immaterial symbol. However, this same material stone, used in a theurgical ritual to attract the support of the god Sun, may also be called a symbol.

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[55] *Chal. Phil.* Fr. 1, p. 206, 21-23.

It is these material symbols to which the few remaining pages of *De Sacrificio* are dedicated. Starting-point is the famous Neoplatonic golden rule of 'all in all but appropriately'[56]: we can see sun and moon on earth (ἐν τῇ γῇ) in an earthly manner (χθονίως), whereas plants and stones and living creatures can be seen in heaven in a heavenly way (ἐν οὐρανῷ οὐρανίως), living noerically (νοερῶς).[57] Once the wise of old came to see this, and were able to link things here to celestial things, 'they led the divine powers towards the mortal place and attracted it through likeness. For likeness is sufficient to join the beings together.'[58] Note that it is likeness (ὁμοιότης) which lends the material symbols its efficiency.

Proclus next draws an analogy to explain how theurgy attracts the divine powers.[59] Take a wick (θρυαλλίς) and heat it first. Then place it under the light of a lamp not far from the fire (we should bear in mind that the Greeks lighted their homes with oil lamps and the like, thus there was no light without fire). Next you will see the wick catching fire from above downwards without actually having touched the fire of the lamp. The heating of the wick is analogous to the sympathy (συμπάθεια) of the things down here for the divine which already exists beforehand. Placing the wick under the lamp is analogous to handling the right material symbols at the right time in the proper way. The catching fire of the wick is analogous to the coming (παρουσία) of the divine light to that which is capable of participating in it (τὸ δυνάμενον μετέχειν), while the divine illumination moves from the ontologically superior towards the inferior, thus from above to below. Theurgy, the art of handling these material symbols, does not just enable the theurgist to enter into contact with divine beings, like daemons, but even to embark on the 'making of gods' (τῶν θεῶν ποιήσεις), i.e. theurgy proper.

These material symbols can be virtually anything. They may be stones, plants or animals. In *De Sacrificio,* Proclus gives a few examples in regard to the sun. Examples of plants which are symbols of the sun are the heliotrope and the lotus. The fact that the former turns around while following the sun and that the latter opens its flowers

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56 On this rule, see Siorvanes 1996: 51-56.

57 *De Sacrificio* 148, 19-21.

58 Ἃ δὴ κατιδόντες οἱ πάλαι σοφοί, τὰ μὲν ἄλλοις, τὰ δὲ ἄλλοις προσάγοντες τῶν οὐρανίων, ἐπήγοντο θείας δυνάμεις εἰς τὸν θνητὸν τόπον καὶ διὰ τῆς ὁμοιότητος ἐφειλκύσαντο· ἱκανὴ γὰρ ἡ ὁμοιότης συνάπτειν τὰ ὄντα ἀλλήλοις· (pp. 148, 21-149, 1).

59 *De Sacrificio* 149, 1-11.

when the sun rises and closes them at sunset show that they have some relation with the sun. Examples of stones which are symbols of the sun are the *helites*, which has a goldlike radiance, and one called 'the eye of Belos' (ὁ Βήλου ὀφθαλμός) which resembles the pupil of an eye and from which a glittering light shines out. The cock, which always greets the rising sun, and the lion are examples of animals sympathetic to the sun. We know that (parts of) sympathetic plants, stones and animals were used during theurgical rites as appropriate offerings. Often they were placed in the statue of the god to be invoked. The Chaldaean Oracles refer to this practice. Fr. 224 instructs the priest to make a statue of Hecate from wild rue and to adorn it with animals which live around the house like lizards. Of these animals a mixture should be rubbed with myrrh, gum, and frankincense. This statue has to be completed in the open, under the waxing moon while the priest is praying. Proclus too refers to such statues, for example in the commentary on the *Cratylus*, where he writes that the telestic art, i.e. theurgy, makes the statues down here (τὰ τῇδε ἀγάλματα) to be like the gods by means of symbols (διά τινων συμβόλων καὶ ἀπορρήτων συνθημάτων),[60] as well as in the commentary on the *Timaeus*.[61] He mentions a specific symbolic statue of Aphrodite in *H.* V 4-5.

5. *The relation between the leader-gods and theurgy*

It is time to take stock. In this chapter we have seen that the later Neoplatonists favoured theurgy over philosophy, because they were convinced that the entirely descended human soul could not unite itself by philosophizing with anything surpassing mere rational thinking. In the previous chapter we have seen that Proclus strives after unification with the Demiurgic Nous, i.e. with an entity surpassing the human soul. We have also seen that the leader-gods play an important role in this process. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the leader-gods play some role in theurgy. In the next chapter, I will try to show that the hymns function in accordance with the theurgical mechanism of sympathetic *symbola*, and hence demonstrate that there is a practical link between theurgy and the leader-gods. However, in *Theologia Platonica* VI c. 4 Proclus appears to give a

[60] *In Crat.* § 51, p. 19, 12ff.
[61] *In Tim.* III 155, 18-22.

theoretical explanation for the fact that the leader-gods are involved in theurgy. Moreover, the close resemblance between the passage from the *Theologia Platonica* and the fragment from the *De Sacrificio* (discussed in § 4.4) makes it likely that the leader-gods are intimately connected with theurgy.

It is stressed in *De Sacrificio* that *symbola* derive their efficiency from likeness (ὁμοιότης) to their causes, i.e. with the gods. In chapter III § 4.4 it appeared that the leader-gods are characterized by likeness, as opposed to the Demiurge who is characterized by sameness. The leader-gods — who are also appropriately called the 'like-making' or 'assimilative' gods (ἀφόμοιωτικοί θεοί) — cause a double likeness. The fact that all products of a cause proceed from the same cause and revert upon the same cause makes the products like each other. At the same time, they are also like their causes.[62] What marks all things off as belonging to the same series is an immaterial symbol of their own monad, i.e. the top of their series (τὸ σύνθημα ἓν πᾶσίν ἐστι τῆς οἰκείας μονάδος).[63] In this way, very lofty things are present in very humble things because the lower things partake of the higher ones, while the less perfect are also present in the more perfect, because the latter contain them as causes.[64] Thus this is once again the principle we came across in the *De Sacrificio* of 'all in all but appropriately' (§ 4.4). Because of this likeness causes and products and products of the same cause are bound together by an indissoluble interweaving (συμπλοκὴ ἀδιάλυτος), which may be called *philia* or *sympatheia*.[65] Note that Iamblichus' distinction between the two terms is neglected, although the expression συμπλοκὴ ἀδιάλυτος is borrowed from him.[66] Proclus also gives two examples of such series bound together by likeness: that of Hermes and that of Helios the sun. Such a series, like that of Helios, he stresses, does not only consist of beings which are superior to us, but also includes souls,

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[62] *Theol. Plat.* VI 4, p. 23, 19-26.

[63] *Theol. Plat.* VI 4, p. 24, 8-9. The relation between the theory of symbolism and that of causative series is not explicitly found in Iamblichus, although it seems justified to suppose that Proclus was inspired by certain remarks by Iamblichus, see Nasemann 1991: 135-136.

[64] *Theol. Plat.* VI 4, pp. 24, 30-25, 2.

[65] *Theol. Plat.* VI 4, p. 24, 26ff.

[66] The expression occurs only in Iamblichus, Proclus and Damascius. For Iamblichus, see, e.g., *Myst.* I 5 (17, 9f.); I 12 (42, 8f.). Nasemann 1991: 32 comments on the term συμπλοκή: 'συμπλοκή ist in De myst. ein haüfiger und zentraler Ausdruck, der insbesondere die Vereinigung des Menschen mit den Göttern bezeichnet.'

animals, plants and stones.[67] From our reading of the *De Sacrificio* we have just learnt what particular stones, plants and animals Proclus is thinking of.

But *Theol. Plat.* VI c. 4 does not tell us everything we would like to know about the relation between theurgy and the ascent of the soul to the paternal harbour of Nous. Especially it does not tell us whether the material symbols are of any use in that process. It may very well be, for example, that we only use our innate symbols to ascend, whereas we use material symbols to invoke the divine power of that series in order to perform white magic. The divine representative of that series thus invoked need not even be the leader-god, but some minor deity of that series like a daemon, for the likeness between the different members of a series guarantees a mutual sympathy. Fortunately, the last paragraph of *De Sacrificio* reveals that, in the case of the leader-gods too, real material symbols are used. Let me quote this text:

> **T. 4.5** In the initiations and other ceremonies concerning the gods too, they selected the appropriate animals and other things. Starting from these and similar things, they obtained knowledge of the daemonic powers, that their beings (i.e. of the daemons) are connected with the activity in nature and in bodies, and they are drawn by means of these things towards intercourse with them. And from the daemonic powers they proceeded even towards the actual making of gods; in some cases they were instructed by the gods, in other cases they themselves were successfully moved by the gods themselves towards the discovery of the symbols belonging to them. In this way then, leaving the nature and the activities of nature behind them in the world below, they used the primary and divine powers.[68]

In this text two levels of theurgy are distinguished: theurgy on the level of daemons and that on the level of the gods. The former level is evidently inferior to the latter. It is connected with nature and the activity of nature. This seems to me to point towards the lowest kind of theurgy in the triple division of theurgy according to Sheppard,

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[67] *Theol. Plat.* VI 4, p. 23, 27ff.: λέγω δὲ οὐ τὰ κρείττονα γένη μόνον ἡμῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ψυχῶν ἀριθμὸς καὶ ζῴων καὶ φυτῶν καὶ λίθων.

[68] *De Sacrificio* 151, 14-23: Καὶ ἐν ταῖς τελεταῖς δὲ καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς θεραπείαις ζῷά τε προσήκοντα ἐξελέγοντο καὶ ἕτερ' ἄττα. Ἀπὸ δὴ τούτων καὶ τῶν τοιούτων ὁρμηθέντες, τὰς δαιμονίους δυνάμεις ἔγνωσαν, ὡς προσεχεῖς εἰσιν οὐσίαι τῆς ἐν τῇ φύσει καὶ τοῖς σώμασιν ἐνεργείας, καὶ ἐπηγάγοντο δι' αὐτῶν τούτων εἰς συνουσίαν· ἀπὸ δὲ τούτων ἐπ' αὐτὰς ἤδη τὰς τῶν θεῶν ἀνέδραμον ποιήσεις, τὰ μὲν ἀπ' αὐτῶν διδασκόμενοι, τὰ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ κινούμενοι παρ' ἑαυτῶν εὐστόχως εἰς τὴν τῶν οἰκείων συμβόλων ἐπίνοιαν· καὶ οὕτω λοιπόν, τὴν φύσιν καὶ τὰς φυσικὰς ἐνεργείας κάτω καταλιπόντες, ταῖς πρωτουργοῖς καὶ θείαις ἐχρήσαντο δυνάμεσι.

i.e. white magic. However, the theurgy concerning the gods leaves the world of nature behind it. Does this thus also exclude material ritual concerning these gods? No, for the text states the theurgists find the symbols appropriate to the gods, either because the gods teach the mortals — by means of oracles I presume — or because the theurgists, inspired by the gods, find these themselves. These symbols cannot be the innate symbols. They consist of 'animals and other suchlike things' which are used in rites. The powers of these gods are described as πρωτουργός (primary). As Festugière translates it, taking the word literally, 'puissances divines qui opèrent en tête de la chaîne.'[69] It underlines that these powers belong to the gods which are 'the leaders of the complete series' (τοὺς ἡγεμόνας τῶν σειρῶν ὅλων).[70] As we have seen, these gods to whom a whole series belong, like Helios, are the leader-gods of *Theologia Platonica*. Indeed, Proclus *Theol. Plat.* VI 4, p. 23, 22-23 refers to the leader-gods as the οἱ ἡγεμονικοὶ καὶ πρωτουργοὶ αἰτίαι.

6. *Conclusions*

We summarize our results in this chapter. Theurgy in its original form aimed at making contact with and working on the gods by means of rites based on cosmic *sympatheia*. The theurgist could thus perform all kinds of miracles and secure the fate of the initiated after death, by cleansing them ritually in this life from the defilement of the body. Neoplatonists from Iamblichus onwards were driven towards the practice of theurgy, because they had lost Plotinus' optimism that philosophical contemplation could lead to unification with the gods. It is important to heed the fact that the Neoplatonists adapted theurgy to their own needs. References to theurgy in Neoplatonic writings, and thus also in Proclus' hymns, should thus be understood not in the light of what we know of theurgy as such, but according to the *interpretatio neoplatonica*.

As for Proclus, we have seen that he participated enthusiastically in both the study and practice of theurgy. However, for Proclus theurgy is not a monolithic thing. I accept Anne Sheppard's tripartite structure of theurgy in Proclus, consisting of white magic, theurgy which makes the soul noerically active and a kind of supreme, non-ritual

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69 Festugière 1944: 136, see also his note 4 .

70 *De Sacrificio* 148, 13.

kind of theurgy. It is my contention that Proclus' hymns are part of Proclus' theurgical practice. They belong to the theurgy of the first and second type. In the next chapter I will argue for this.

Finally, I have argued that the leader-gods, the gods to whom most hymns are directed and who are the ones who establish us in Nous, are the theurgical gods *par excellence*. They are the prime causes of the likeness that endow the material symbols in the theurgical rites with their special powers. It is by means of these symbols that the Neoplatonic theurgist attracts the divine powers and thus 'make gods', i.e. they allow us to make an *epistrophe* to and subsequently effectuate *unification* with the leader-gods, our return to the paternal harbour of divine Nous.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HYMNS: THEURGY IN PRACTICE

1. *Introduction*

In the preceding chapter we focused on the mechanisms of theurgy. In the present chapter we shall examine to what degree we see the mechanisms of theurgy at work in the hymns. We shall first turn to Proclus' theory of theurgical prayer, which he borrowed from Iamblichus. It is sometimes suggested that this theory underlies the structure of Proclus' hymns. We shall examine this view. Next, we shall look into the use of different sorts of symbols in the hymns. Thirdly, we shall raise the question whether Proclus' hymns were themselves part of ritual acts. Finally, in our concluding section, we shall determine to what extent the study of Proclus' hymns contributes to our understanding of theurgy.

2. *Proclus' theory of prayer*

2.1 *Prayer as theurgy*

In the search for theurgy in Proclus' hymns, we shall now first turn to his theory of prayer as presented in *In Tim.* I 206, 26-214, 12. It is intended as a commentary on Plato *Ti.* 27c where Timaeus first prays (εὔχεσθαι) to the gods and goddesses before embarking upon his account of the creation of the cosmos. Proclus seizes this opportunity to reflect and elaborate on Iamblichus' doctrine concerning the power and perfection of prayer, which is 'amazing, supernatural and surpasses everything we may hope for.'[1] His subsequent account of prayer is indeed in line with Iamblichus' discussion of prayer in *Myst.* V 26, although Proclus will appear to divide prayer into five stages, whereas Iamblichus restricts himself to three.[2]

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[1] *In Tim.* I 209, 7-9.
[2] For Iamblichus' theory of prayer, see appendix A in Dillon 1973: 407-411.

Proclus starts by giving a brief exposition of his theory of causation. Everything somehow proceeds from the gods. Everything that proceeds from its cause remains in it, hence we remain somehow rooted in the gods. On the other hand, everything that proceeds seeks to return to its cause. Therefore everything has had implanted in itself two types of symbols (*In Tim.* I 210, 13: διττὰ συνθήματα) of the gods: one type in order that the products remain with their causes, another enabling a return to those causes.[3] These symbols are placed in the souls at the time of their creation by the Demiurge. It is by means of the latter type of symbols that through prayer we return to the gods. Proclus' explanation of the efficiency of prayer shows that his theory is, as he professes it to be, a chip off the old Iamblichean block, as the following passage shows:

> **T. 5.1** And prayer contributes enormously to this *epistrophe* by means of the ineffable symbols of the gods, which the Father of the souls has sown into them. It attracts the beneficence of the gods towards itself and it unifies those who pray to those to whom they pray, it links the intellect of the gods to the words of those who pray, it moves the will of those who contain all goods in a perfect way to bestow them without envy, it creates the persuasion of the divine, and it establishes all that we have in the gods.[4]

We have seen in **T. 4.2** that Iamblichus went to some lengths to show that the theurgist did not force the gods, but that the gods conferred their blessings on the theurgist because of the ties of *philia* between the gods and their creatures. They did so in accordance with their own will (βούλησις). Moreover, they did so without envy (ἀφθόνως). In the same vein, Proclus says that prayer creates persuasion (πειθώ) of the divine, i.e. as opposed to force. This persuasion too originates from Iamblichus who states that prayer awakens persuasion, communion and indissoluble friendship.[5]

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[3] See chapter II § 3.2 for a discussion of hymn-singing against the background of this theory of causation.

[4] *In Tim.* I 210, 30-211, 8: πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἐπιστροφὴν ταύτην ἡ εὐχὴ μεγίστην παρέχεται συντέλειαν συμβόλοις ἀρρήτοις τῶν θεῶν, ἃ τῶν ψυχῶν ὁ πατὴρ ἐνέσπειρεν αὐταῖς, τῶν θεῶν τὴν εὐποιίαν ἕλκουσα εἰς ἑαυτὴν καὶ ἑνοῦσα μὲν τοὺς εὐχομένους ἐκείνοις, πρὸς οὓς εὔχονται, συνάπτουσα δὲ καὶ τὸν τῶν θεῶν νοῦν πρὸς τοὺς τῶν εὐχομένων λόγους, κινοῦσα δὲ τὴν βούλησιν τῶν τελείως τὰ ἀγαθὰ περιεχόντων ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐπὶ τὴν ἄφθονον αὐτῶν μετάδοσιν, πειθοῦς τε οὖσα τῆς θείας δημιουργὸς καὶ ὅλα τὰ ἡμέτερα τοῖς θεοῖς ἐνιδρύουσα.

[5] *Myst.* V 26 (239, 6f.): (prayer) πειθὼ δὲ καὶ κοινωνίαν καὶ φιλίαν ἀδιάλυτον ἐγείρει.

Iamblichus also helps us to understand the somewhat puzzling remark that prayer links the intellect of the gods to the words of praying men. Porphyry had asked whether it was still useful to pray to the gods, who must be supposed to be pure intellects without sensory perceptions. Sensory perception presupposes after all contact with matter. Therefore, it seems impossible that the gods can actually hear what we are saying to them. Iamblichus replies that, given the fact that the theurgist is united to the gods, his thoughts coincide with theirs. Thus he does not communicate with the gods as one being to another, but they are literally of one mind, with no need for verbal communication, even though the theurgist utters a prayer.[6] Since prayer, according to **T. 5.1**, unifies us to the gods, it enables us to make our prayers known to the gods. Most important, finally, is the fact that the notion that prayer leads to unification (ἡ ἄρρητος ἕνωσις) with the gods is also Iamblichean.[7]

It will be remembered that in *De Sacrificio* too prayer was conceived as an *epistrophe* to a causative principle (see **T. 2.3**) and that this happens on the basis of *sympatheia* derived from engraved symbols (see chapter IV § 4.4). Proclus *In Tim.* I 210, 14-25 connects what has been said there with his theory of prayer here, when he observes that this is not only the case for human souls but also for things without souls. In them Nature has sown symbols which render the various things akin to the various series of the gods, like the sunlike things and the moonlike things. The moonstones, heliotropes, and lotuses of *De Sacrificio* (chapter IV § 4.4) spring to mind here. For this reason, I believe that we are allowed to assume that Proclus believed that this mechanism of theurgical symbolism is at work in the case of his own hymns. All the same, this does not mean that we can project everything that is said in the *In Tim.*-passage onto the hymns, as we are now about to see.

2.2 *Do Proclus' hymns follow his theory?*

Proclus proceeds (*In Tim.* I 211, 8-212, 1) to divide true prayer into five successive stages. First of all, one should have knowledge (γνῶσις) of all the ranks of divinities which the person praying will

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[6] Cf. Proclus *In Crat.* § 73 p. 35, 24-26 where Proclus denies that gods hear prayers, since they are without a body, but that they know beforehand what we want.

[7] *Myst.* V 26 (238, 3-6)

encounter. Next we should become familiar with the divine (οἰκείωσις), aiming at becoming like the divine (ὁμοίωσις) in respect of purity, chastity, education and order, 'by means of which we offer what is ours to the gods, and attract their favour.' Thirdly we gain contact (συναφή) with the gods, when we attain the divine being with the summit of our soul and converge upon it. Fourth there is the approaching (ἐμπέλασις). Proclus here quotes Chaldaean Oracle Fr. 121 from which he borrows the term: 'For the mortal who has approached the fire will possess the light from God.'[8] Finally there is the unification which establishes the one of the soul in the one of the gods (*In Tim.* I 211, 24f.: τελευταία δὲ ἡ ἕνωσις, αὐτῷ τῷ ἑνὶ τῶν θεῶν τὸ ἓν τῆς ψυχῆς ἐνιδρύουσα) and makes our *energeiai* and that of the gods one.

It is only logical to wonder with Beierwaltes to what extent this theory of a five-fold prayer emerges in the hymns.[9] Esser 1967: 105-108 formulated an affirmative answer to this question. He set himself the task of comparing the hymns to the theory. Let us now present his findings. In the hymn to Helios he recognizes the fourth stage (ἐμπέλασις), for Proclus prays to Helios for divine light. In the hymns to Aphrodite he finds the second phase of οἰκείωσις, since in both hymns Proclus prays that he may not fall victim to the wrong kind of love, and because it is characteristic of Aphrodite to familiarize the soul with divine Beauty. The hymns to the Muses and to the Mother of the gods, Hecate, and Zeus also illustrate the second phase, for these two hymns contain prayers for the liberation of the soul from the realm of matter.

Esser assumes too hastily that we may compare Proclus' hymns to this theory. The fact is that the theory of prayer focuses on 'perfect and true prayer' (*In Tim.* I 211, 9f.: τῆς τελείας καὶ ὄντως οὔσης εὐχῆς) which culminates in unification on the level of the henads. That is what Proclus means when he speaks about the unification of the one in us with the one of the gods.[10] Moreover he has made it clear from the start of the discussion that the gods to whom these prayers are directed are the henads: they are οἱ θεοί καὶ οἱ πρωτίστοι ἑνάδες (*In Tim.* I 210, 5f.), καὶ being explicative here.

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[8] Trans. Majercik 1989: 95: τῷ πυρὶ γὰρ βροτὸς ἐμπελάσας θεόθεν φάος ἕξει.

[9] 'Eine verlockende Aufgabe wäre es, durch eine philosophische Interpretation der Hymnen des Proklos zu untersuchen, inwieweit in ihnen seine Theorie des Gebetes Prinzip der Dichtung geworden ist' (Beierwaltes 1979²: 393 n. 9).

[10] About which see chapter III § 3.

Now the first two phases of knowledge and becoming familiar are perhaps not very specific for our contact with the divine henads, and it is perhaps justified to recognize something of this in the hymns. The subsequent phases, though, are a different matter. When we take a closer look at the third phase in which contact is gained with the gods, we see that it is the moment at which we touch upon the divine being with the summit of our soul (*In Tim.* I 211, 18f. ἐφαπτόμεθα τῆς θείας οὐσίας τῷ ἀκροτάτῳ τῆς ψυχῆς). According to Esser 1967: 90 this summit is the νοερόν. However, Proclus *Chal. Phil.* IV explains that *nous* can never be the summit (p. 209, 18: οὐκ ἔστι νοῦς τὸ ἀκρότατον), including in the case of the human soul (p. 209, 19f.: ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς οὐκ ἔστι νοερὸν τὸ πρῶτον τῆς ἐνεργείας εἶδος). Instead it is the 'one in us' (p. 209, 25f.). Since the third phase of perfect prayer already involves the 'one in us' touching the henads, it seems to me impossible that we can have the fourth phase in a prayer to a leader-god.

What about the first two phases, that of knowledge and οἰκείωσις, which are not necessarily characteristic for our contact with the henads? We have noted that Esser finds the second phase in some of the hymns. It is true that the hymns are primarily concerned with attempts to flee the realm of matter and hence with οἰκείωσις with the divine (see e.g. *H.* I 36-38; *H.* II 20-21; *H.* III 10-15; *H.* IV 10-12; *H.* V 14-15; *H.* VI 6-7, 10; VII 37-42). We may add to this that the hymns also display the first phase, i.e. that of knowledge. As we shall see, the first part of each hymn is not taken up by prayers proper, but by a celebration of the god invoked which shows Proclus' profound knowledge of the place of each deity in the divine hierarchy and his or her functions. This first part is often also the largest section of a hymn. The notable exception here is the sixth hymn to the Mother of the Gods, Hecate and Zeus, but even in that case the use of the epithets betrays a profound theological knowledge, as will appear in the commentary to vss. 1-3. In my opinion, this does not necessarily point into the direction of influence from the theory about prayers on Proclus' hymns. Even Plotinus, who has no reputation for being a great lover of prayer, believes that every movement of ascent starts with acquiring knowledge, followed by purification.[11] As for Proclus' display of knowledge in the opening sections of the hymns, I shall

[11] *Enn.* VI 7 (38) 36, 6ff., for a discussion of this passage, see Hadot 1988: 347ff. and Meijer 1992: 188f.

argue below that these have a special purpose. In my opinion they serve as theurgical symbols of some sort.

In answer to Beierwaltes' question, then, I would respond that the scheme of prayer in five stages as we find it in the commentary on the *Timaeus* does not in any clear way surface in Proclus' hymns. The reason for this is that the type of prayers discussed in the *In Tim.* are concerned with the unification on the level of the henads, whereas Proclus' hymns are not.

3. *Symbols in the hymns*

3.1 *Four sorts of symbols*

As we have seen in the chapter on theurgy, Proclus can take symbols in a narrower and a wider sense. In the former it is the immaterial mark of a certain series imprinted in its product. In the latter sense, it is the product itself which the theurgist may use to attract the god belonging to the same series as it. In Proclus' discussion of the role of symbols in prayer which we have analysed above, he only refers to innate symbols in the human soul which link our prayers to the gods. Nevertheless, we may also detect the latter kind of symbols in Proclus' hymns. These can be divided into two groups. On the one hand there are what I would like to call linguistic symbols, i.e. certain stories and names which may serve as a theurgical symbol; on the other hand there are some references to the handling of material symbols in the hymns during the recitation of the latter.

3.2 *Innate symbols*

Innate symbols can of course not be shown in a hymn. However, there are two occasions in the hymns on which Proclus underlines that he belongs to the series of the deity invoked. In his hymn to Athena, Proclus begs Athena to come to his aid 'since I profess to belong to you' (vs. 42 ὅτι τεὸς εὔχομαι εἶναι). As Marinus explains in his biography (quoted in the commentary *ad loc.*), Proclus was born in Byzantium, a city dedicated to Athena. Thus she 'became the cause of his birth.' Hence Proclus belongs to the series of Athena, and she is therefore bound to exercise providence towards him because of *sympatheia*.

In *H.* V, Proclus invokes Aphrodite, the queen of the Lycians (vs. 1 Λυκίων βασιληίδα). Later on in the hymn, Proclus implores the help of the goddess 'for I myself too am of Lycian blood' (vs. 13). This is true, for Proclus' parents were natives of Lycia (see my commentary on that verse). The idea behind this reminder is the same as in the hymn to Athena. Since Proclus is a Lycian, there is a certain bond of sympathy with the god of the Lycians, which Proclus tries to activate in this way.

To this we may add the invocation of the sun as 'holding himself the key of the life-supporting source' (*H.* I 2f.). Proclus, following the famous sun simile in Plato's *Republic*, ascribes a special role to the sun as cause of all life in the universe. It is a second demiurge.[12] As such the sun holds a special place in the process of causation, and thus, of reversion, as will appear from a discussion of the role of the sun in Chaldaean soteriology.[13] The situation in this case is somewhat different from the two above-mentioned examples. Proclus does not explicitly mention that the sun should therefore come to his aid, as he did in the other two cases. However, the aretology in the first part of that hymn, including this line, as a whole serves as an expression of the power of the god Helios, who should fulfil Proclus' prayers, 'for you have mighty and infinite power' (*H.* I 47).

3.3 *Symbolic myths*

3.3.1 *Myths as symbols*

Contrary to e.g. the Homeric hymns and those by Callimachus, Proclus' hymns do not contain elaborate versions of myths in which the deities invoked play the leading roles. Instead he refers in an allusive manner to stories about these deities. Take for example the hymn to Athena. In vss. 1-2, Proclus refers to the spectacular birth of Athena from the head of Zeus (without even so much as mentioning Zeus' head); in vs. 8 he refers to the battle against the Giants; in vss. 9-10 to Hephaistos' frustrated attempt to rape Athena; in vss. 11-15 to the Orphic myth of the assault on Dionysus and his subsequent raising by Zeus with the help of Athena; in vss. 16-17 to an unknown story of Athena fighting Hecate; and finally in vss. 21-30 to the story of the battle between Poseidon and Athena about the possession of Attica.

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[12] See my commentary *ad loc.*
[13] For which see my commentary to *H.* I 34.

Why does Proclus refer to these myths? This was not a matter of blindly following conventions and traditions. Far from it. The traditional stories about the gods as found in Homer and Hesiod do not present the gods as philosophical sages, completely disengaged from the πάθη of the material world. Instead they behave like humans do: they fight each other, as Athena the Giants, they are driven by lust, like Hephaistos had for Athena, or envy each other, like Poseidon and Athena. For Plato this had been sufficient reason to drive the authors of such repellent stories about the gods, including Homer, out of his ideal city. However, since the Neoplatonists of the Athenian school accepted the claims of Homer and Hesiod to be divinely inspired, they were unwilling to discard them as authorities on divine matters. In their efforts to save Homer and Hesiod they resorted to an allegorical reading of their poetry, which neutralized offensive elements and turned the old poets into state of the art Neoplatonic philosophers instead. Since a good understanding of the Neoplatonic allegorical reading of these texts is a requirement for understanding Proclus' own poetry, we shall look more deeply into this matter in the next chapter.

For the moment, it will suffice to point out that Proclus refers to this allegorizing approach not as ὑπόνοια, as Plato had done, nor as ἀλληγορία, as was the term in Hellenistic times, but as symbolism, using the word σύμβολον.[14] Since the word symbol is the same as the one used in the context of theurgy, one cannot help wondering whether there is some connection between Proclus' theory of literature and that of theurgy. Anne Sheppard has convincingly argued that there indeed is.[15] Just as the gods cast innate symbols into their products, they inspire some poets with stories. Just as the gods may be attracted by means of these symbols, the recitation of these inspired stories in the context of a ritual may attract the gods.

Let us look at a passage which brings out the relation between literary symbolism and theurgy. In *In RP.* I 81, 28-86, 23, Proclus discusses the symbolical interpretation of some myths, which Plato had labelled indecent and therefore banned from his ideal city. Among these stories is Hephaistos' attempt to rape Athena, also commemorated as we just saw in the hymn to Athena. Proclus admits

14 So Sheppard 1980: 145.

15 Sheppard 1980: 145-161; her lead has been taken up by Erler 1987 in his interpretation of *H.* II, and referred to with approval in Lamberton 1986: 190 n. 102.

that these stories should not be told to youngsters, but all the same they should not be done away with completely, for

> **T. 5.2** … to a small number of people who have woken up to understanding, myths reveal the sympathy which they have towards reality, and the theurgical rites themselves guarantee that their power is connatural to the gods. For the gods themselves rejoice at hearing such symbols and they are persuaded willingly by those who call upon them and they show what is peculiar to them through these signs because they are appropriate to them and especially familiar. … <If we really want to ban these myths completely>,[16] let us then not say that such myths of the Greek theologians do not help to educate (sc. the young, RMB) in virtue, but let us show that they are not as much in harmony with the hieratic rites as they can possibly be. Let us then not say that they imitate the divine in a dissimilar way by means of incongruous symbols, but let us demonstrate that they do not prepare in us beforehand an ineffable sympathy with a view to communion with the gods.[17]

The relation between symbolic poetry and theurgy is made explicit here. It is theurgy itself which guarantees that these seemingly indecent myths can be trusted to reveal the truth. They are as much related to the hieratic rites, i.e. theurgy, as they can possibly be. Just as is the case in theurgy, the gods are moved by these symbolic stories to hearken to the people who make use of them. Note that the gods do so willingly (ἀκούοντες χαίρουσιν/ἑτοίμως πείθονται). We recall here that Iamblichus defined theurgy as opposed to magic by the fact that theurgy used persuasion (πειθώ) as opposed to force. The *sympatheia*, that pivotal ingredient of theurgy, that exists between these symbolic stories and the gods activates in its turn our relation of *sympatheia* with the gods so that we may have communion with them.

Another passage in the commentary on the *Republic* extols the power of myths in initiation rites. Myths not only influence people who have prepared themselves, but even the masses:

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16 I follow here Festugière's suggestion that we have to insert something like this, see Festugière trans. *In RP*. vol. 1 p. 100 n. 2.

17 *In RP*. I 83, 15-84, 2: τοῖς δὲ εἰς νοῦν ἀνεγειρομένοις ὀλίγοις δή τισιν ἐκφαίνει τὴν ἑαυτῶν πρὸς τὰ πράγματα συμπάθειαν, καὶ τὴν ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν ἱερατικῶν ἔργων παρέχεται πίστιν τῆς πρὸς τὰ θεῖα συμφυοῦς δυνάμεως· καὶ γὰρ οἱ θεοὶ τῶν τοιῶνδε συμβόλων ἀκούοντες χαίρουσιν καὶ τοῖς καλοῦσιν ἑτοίμως πείθονται καὶ τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἰδιότητα προφαίνουσιν διὰ τούτων ὡς οἰκείων αὐτοῖς καὶ μάλιστα γνωρίμων συνθημάτων· … μὴ τοίνυν λέγωμεν ὡς οὐ παιδευτικοὶ πρὸς ἀρετήν εἰσιν οἱ τοιοίδε μῦθοι τῶν παρ' Ἕλλησιν θεολόγων, ἀλλ' ὡς οὐχὶ τοῖς ἱερατικοῖς θεσμοῖς συμφωνότατοι δεικνύωμεν, μηδὲ ὡς ἀνομοίως μιμοῦνται τὰ θεῖα διὰ τῶν ἀπεμφαινόντων συμβόλων, ἀλλ' ὡς οὐχὶ συμπάθειαν ἡμῖν ἄρρητον προπαρασκευάζουσιν εἰς τὴν μετουσίαν τῶν θεῶν.

T. 5.3 The initiations show that the myths even influence the masses. For these too, using myths as vehicles, in which to embody the ineffable truth concerning the gods, establish for the souls a sympathy with the ongoing ritual in a divine way that is incomprehensible to us. The result is that some of the initiates, filled with divine terror, are astounded, whereas others are affected in a positive way by the holy symbols and, in a state of ecstasy, are completely established in the gods and inspired by them. Evidently, I would say, the classes of beings superior to us which follow the gods awake in us, by means of our love for such signs, the sympathy with the gods which is brought about by means of them.[18]

T. 5.2 stressed that the use of mythical symbols attracts the gods and makes them obey us voluntarily. However, since sympathy connects god and man, it is not enough just to arouse sympathy on the part of the divine. We too have to be disposed sympathetically towards the divine if we are to benefit from the divine beneficence. Here too, the recitation of myths in the context of ritual proves functional, as **T. 5.3** shows. It awakens in us a sympathy for the divine, with the result that we, in ecstasy, step outside ourselves into the world of the gods. In the commentary on the *Parmenides* Proclus stresses the need for action on both sides. 'When a man is anticipating the appearance of the divine, he must exert himself to stir up the divine spark within him in preparation for participating in higher beings.'[19] Dillon sees a reference to theurgical practice in this line.[20] He suggests that we stir up the divine spark in us by means of uttering incantations and performing theurgical rites. As **T. 5.3** shows, one way of stirring up the divine in us is by reciting myths during these rites. As for the hymns, this double function of symbolic myths (i.e. the fact that they awake sympathy at both ends) explains why Proclus chooses to refer to such myths especially at their beginning. On the one hand, it guarantees that the divinity invoked will answer Proclus' prayers, and on the other hand it prepares Proclus to receive the gifts asked for.

18 *In RP* II 108, 17-27: Ὅτι δὲ καὶ εἰς τοὺς πολλοὺς δρῶσιν οἱ μῦθοι, δηλοῦσιν αἱ τελεταί. καὶ γὰρ αὗται χρώμεναι τοῖς μύθοις, ἵνα τὴν περὶ θεῶν ἀλήθειαν ἄρρητον κατακλείωσιν, συμπαθείας εἰσὶν αἴτιαι ταῖς ψυχαῖς περὶ τὰ δρώμενα τρόπον ἄγνωστον ἡμῖν καὶ θεῖον· ὡς τοὺς μὲν τῶν τελουμένων καταπλήττεσθαι δειμάτων θείων πλήρεις γιγνομένους, τοὺς δὲ συνδιατίθεσθαι τοῖς ἱεροῖς συμβόλοις καὶ ἑαυτῶν ἐκστάντας ὅλους ἐνιδρῦσθαι τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ἐνθεάζειν· πάντως που καὶ τῶν ἑπομένων αὐτοῖς κρειττόνων ἡμῶν γενῶν διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὰ τοιαῦτα συνθήματα φιλίαν ἀνεγειρόντων ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς δι' αὐτῶν συμπάθειαν.

19 *In Parm.* II 781, 11ff., trans. Morrow/Dillon 1987: 143.

20 Morrow/Dillon 1987: 100.

3.3.2 *Parallels for the use of symbolic myths*

Proclus' use of symbolic myths in rituals is no innovation on his part. Comparison with other examples of the use of symbolic myths may increase our understanding of their use in the context of Proclus' hymns. The idea is already present in the writings of Julian the Apostate, especially in his long exposition on myths in the treatise against the cynic Herakleios. The secret and unknown nature of the characters (τῶν χαρακτήρων), i.e. theurgical symbols, treats both body and soul and causes appearances of the gods (θεραπεύει γοῦν οὐ ψυχὰς μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ σώματα, καὶ θεῶν ποιεῖ παρουσίας). These things are also often brought about by means of myths (διὰ τῶν μύθων), which Julian calls telestic myths (τῶν τελεστικῶν μύθων).[21] We note that, according to Julian, myths — since they are supposed to do the same as symbols — work into two directions. On the one hand they work on the body and soul of man, on the other they make the gods appear. This corresponds to Proclus' account that the myths draw the gods towards us and prepare us to enter into contact with them.

Bouffartigue, in his impressive study on Julian and the culture of his day, notes that Proclus' idea that myths and theurgy are related parallels Julian's idea.[22] He is convinced that both Julian and Proclus are inspired by Iamblichus.[23] He may very well be right, although it should be noted that the Iamblichean text, which Bouffartigue cites to show that Proclus' ideas depend on those of Iamblichus, is not concerned with myths but with iconic representations.[24] In fact, Iamblichus has disappointingly little to say on the specific theurgical qualities of hymns.

However, other Neoplatonists are not the only source for parallels. As we have seen (chapter IV § 2), Neoplatonic theurgy was not invented by the Neoplatonists but was an adaptation and rationalisation of existing magical practice to meet philosophical ends. The use of myths in order to evoke sympathy in prayers illustrates this process of adaptation, as may be shown when we look at the use of myths in ordinary, i.e. non-philosophical, hymns. William Furley (1995) examines it in an article on praise and persuasion in Greek hymns, paying special attention to the use of myths. Furley admits that myths

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21 Julian *Or.* VII c. 11 (216c-217b).

22 See Bouffartigue 1992: 337-345 on Julian's doctrine of myths and its relation to Iamblichus and Proclus.

23 Bouffartigue 1992: 341: 'La source commune à Julien et à Proclus ne peut être que Jamblique.'

24 As Bouffartigue 1992: 340 n. 92 himself admits.

may sometimes have been included in hymns for entertainment, as in case of the humorous story of Hermes' theft of Apollo's cattle in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*.[25] However, most of the time they

> must be viewed as an element of the worshipper's attempt to secure divine favour and guide it in a direction or channel beneficial to himself. Frequently the attempt uses familiar mythical narrative from the past with a view to extracting similar favours now or in the future (similar to the 'da quia dedisti' type of argument in prayer); … Hymn-singing involves belief in, and accurate naming of, divine powers; the myths used in supplicatory address show these powers in action as a model for present expectations. Just as kings like to hear tales about other kings (which the minstrel can cleverly tailor so as both to please the sovereign and project his own ideal of monarchy) so divine myths in hymns are sung to please the deity addressed and suggest suitable ways for him/her to act (Furley 1995: 43).

Two of Furley's examples may sufficiently illustrate his point. In a hymn to Apollo, composed for the Athenian Pythais festival either in 138 or 128 BC, the poet commemorates the facts that Apollo slew the Pytho and overcame the Gauls, who are described in mythological language as 'latter-day Titans'. These two episodes serve as examples of Apollo's saving power in a prayer for deliverance from adversity. They argue that Apollo could do so again.

Another example is taken from the magical papyri. It is an incantation used in healing illness. It refers to the (unknown) story of an initiate who was set afire on the top of a mountain. Fortunately, however, seven divine dark-eyed maidens appeared with dark urns pouring water on the fire. In the same way, the bodily inflammation of the patient should be extinguished. Furley here quotes Kotansky who calls this the employment of some sort of 'sympathetic magic'.

Let me first point out the essential difference between this sympathetic magic and Proclus' use of myths. As Furley observes, these mythical references are included to please the gods as if they were human kings. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Iamblichus took great pains to show that the theurgists did not envisage the gods as beings full of emotions like mortals and who are thus be susceptible to flattery and can be manipulated. Instead the Neoplatonic gods are sympathetic towards the symbols which they themselves, on their own account, have revealed to mankind.

All the same the similarity in the use of myths between these hymns and those by Proclus is clear. Let us take our example of the

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[25] Furley 1995: 40.

hymn to Athena mentioned above (§ 3.3.1). The myths referred to may be explained along the same lines as the myths in the non-philosophical hymns. In order to understand the relevance of the myths for Proclus' prayers in the second part of the hymn, it is important to know Proclus' symbolical reading of them. In the commentary to this hymn I shall elaborate on Proclus' allegorical interpretation of these myths. At this point, I shall only refer briefly to the outcome of that discussion. The story of Athena's birth from the head of Zeus refers to the fact that Athena belongs to the class of leader-gods who emanate directly from the demiurgic Nous, i.e. Zeus. As we have seen, it is the task of these leader-gods to establish us in that paternal Nous, which they can only do because they themselves emanate directly from it. In this hymn Proclus prays to Athena twice to help him to return to that paternal Nous: in vs. 32 he asks for a safe harbour, i.e. the paternal Nous, and in vs. 36 he asks Athena to drag him away to the house of her father (πατρὸς ἐῆος) on Mt. Olympus, i.e. to Zeus. By mentioning this myth, then, Proclus activates the bond of sympathy between Zeus, Athena and himself. Athena is the mediator between Proclus and Zeus. As such she can and should help Proclus to come into contact with Zeus.

The next myth referred to is that of the battle between the Olympian gods and the Giants. In Proclus' allegorical reading of the myth this means that Athena makes the intelligent prevail over the irrational, the immaterial over the material, unity over plurality on a general level. Later on Proclus prays to Athena to help him to achieve exactly this in his private life, to escape from the chains of the material world that keep his soul captive (vss. 37-42). The same goes for the myths of Hephaistos in vain trying to rape Athena, the onslaught on Dionysus, and the fight between Athena and Hecate. According to Proclus, all these myths come down to a struggle between the rational and the irrational, the immaterial and the material, in which the forces of Athena in the end carry the day. The last myth, that of the quarrel between Athena and Poseidon over Attica, serves yet another function. According to this myth, Attica was allotted to Athena, thus she is obliged to care for it and its inhabitants, notably the philosophers of the Neoplatonic Academy. This myth activates the bond of sympathy between Athena and Athens. It seems to me that it is supposed to bequeath power to Proclus' prayer at the end of the hymn for power against his enemies. These are probably the Christians, who threaten to close down the pagan

philosophical school and thus endanger everything Athens as a centre of learning (vs. 23: Athens as a 'mother of books') had always stood for.

3.3.3 *A proof: the use of Il. 5, 127-8*

It may be objected that the interpretation of mythical references in Proclus' hymns as theurgical symbols which I have just sketched is hypothetical. How do we know that Proclus intended to put his theory that myths may operate as symbols into practice? It is not enough just to point out the parallels with non-philosophical hymns. This just pushes the problem one stage back. Although I am fully convinced by Furley's approach of myths in hymns, he does not produce proof that this what the ancient hymnmakers thought they were doing. His main argument is that it makes good sense of mythical portions within the context of the unity of the hymns. I now intend to show, first, that in non-philosophical hymns and prayers there was such a thing as the magical use of myths and, second, that Proclus' use of myths to evoke the divine sympathy is indeed linked with this usage.

In his old but still valuable study on the worship of the Muses by Greek philosophers, Pierre Boyancé draws attention to the use of Homer and Hesiod by the Pythagoreans as a medicine against the passions which impede the philosopher in his progress. He then elaborates on the history of the use of Homeric texts in magical contexts.[26] He refers notably to an episode in Lucian *Cont.* 7. Charon, who visits the world of the living under the guidance of Hermes, is unable to see the things up here clearly. Hermes offers Charon to cure (ἰάσομαι) him by means of an incantation (ἐπῳδή) taken from Homer. He then recites *Il.* 5, 127-8. In the context of the *Iliad*, Athena encourages Diomedes, telling him that she will imbue him with power and courage and that she will lift the mist which covers his eyes, so that he will be capable of distinguishing mortals from the gods. Literally she says: ἀχλὺν δ' αὖ τοι ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἕλον, ἣ πρὶν ἐπῆεν, | ὄφρ' εὖ γινώσκοις ἠμὲν θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα. These words are verbally repeated by Hermes, whose cure proves to be effective.

Boyancé observes that there is a certain analogy between the mythical context in the *Iliad* and this situation. In both cases the physical ability to see is improved. In the case of Charon the

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[26] Boyancé 1936: 115-131, see especially pp. 126-131.

quotation of the verses from the *Iliad* heals him as '*par une sorte de magie sympathique*.' He then continues by showing that Neoplatonic sources attach an allegorical meaning to these verses. The human soul is blinded because of its life in a body. It is unable to see the material realities clearly unless aided by the gods. As a result of this symbolic reading, Proclus can insert these verses in his hymn to the unnamed gods of wisdom (*H.* IV 6-7) in his prayer for illumination. Boyancé could have added *H.* I 41, which paraphrases the same verses. The fact that Proclus alludes twice to the same Homeric verses point to the fact that he did probably think of them as important for the quality of his hymns as instruments for attracting the divine powers. So, what we have here, then, is a nice demonstration that mythological material, like the Diomedes-episode, could be used for magical purposes and that Proclus, in his hymns, avails himself of this practice, after he had interpreted the story allegorically.

3.3.4 *Further proof from the hymns*

To the example of the Diomedes-passage, another proof that Proclus indeed believed that myths had some theurgical power can be added. In his hymn to Athena, of which we have just analysed the mythical components, he prays: 'Give my soul holy light from your sacred myths (ἀπ' εὐιέρων σέο μύθων) and wisdom and love (*H.* VII 33f.).' This request follows *after* the mythical sections in the first part of the hymn and it seems to me that these myths are therefore the ones just mentioned. In the analysis of how symbolic myths work (§ 3.1), we saw that they work in two directions: they activate the divine sympathy towards us, whereas at the same time they awaken our sympathy towards the divine. These two dimensions are brought out in this prayer. On the one hand, Proclus hopes to obtain the holy light of illumination and wisdom from Athena's myths (the top-down perspective). We may recall here that, according to **T. 5.2**, the gods show willingly what is peculiar to them through symbolic myths. On the other hand, Proclus prays for love. From what follows (vss. 34-36) it is evident that this is the love felt by the philosopher for the divine realm that makes him flee the material world. Thus, this love inspired by Athena's myths is, in the words of **T. 5.2**, that 'ineffable sympathy with a view to communion with the gods', which symbolic myths prepare in us.

In *H.* III 11, Proclus prays to the Muses that they may bring him to ecstasy through the noeric myths of the wise (νοεροῖς με σοφῶν

βακχεύσατε μύθοις). As shall be shown in the commentary to these verses, *Phdr.* 245a1ff. underlies this verse. There, Plato discusses poetic madness. The myths mentioned here thus probably include the myths as found in inspired poets such as Homer and Hesiod. These myths cause a state of ecstasy (βακχεύσατε). All in all, there seems to be good evidence that Proclus indeed ascribed theurgical qualities to myths and that he puts these to use in his hymns.

3.4 *Symbolic names*

3.4.1 *Names as symbols*

A firm belief to be found in most cultures is that names contain special powers. Especially in case of divine names, these powers can be used for magical purposes. The Greeks were no exception to this rule and the theurgists took over this belief. One of the Chaldaean oracles warns the theurgist not to change the ὀνόματα βάρβαρα, i.e. not to translate the foreign names of the gods into Greek, for these names possess an ineffable power in the initiation rites.[27] As we might expect, Proclus takes a special interest in the powers contained in divine names for theurgical purposes. His views on this matter are recorded in the commentary on Plato's *Cratylus*. This work is probably an excerpt of a collection of notes taken by an anonymous student during Proclus' course on that dialogue without any demonstrable additions of the student's own.[28] Proclus' theory of language and its relation to his notion of theurgy as it appears in this commentary was the object of Hirschle's study entitled *Sprachphilosophie und Namenmagie im Neoplatonismus*. Although, as we have seen in the chapter IV § 3, the Neoplatonists denied emphatically that they had anything to do with magic, and the use of the term *Namenmagie* to describe theurgy is therefore most unfortunate, this study provides the reader with a profitable discussion of Proclus' philosophy of language. I shall now sketch Hirschle's views on the relation between theurgy and the philosophy of language.

3.4.2 *Hirschle on divine names and theurgy*

In the commentary on the *Cratylus*, Proclus engages himself in the old debate about the status of ὀνόματα as to whether they are θέσει, i.e. based on convention or φύσει, i.e. based on nature. He takes a

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[27] Fr. 150; for more information on this oracle, see Majercik 1989: 197.
[28] For this characterization of the work, see Sheppard 1987: 138f.

sophisticated stand: all ὀνόματα are both φύσει and θέσει. When it comes to their form (εἶδος), they are φύσει because they resemble the things to which they refer. Hirschle 1979: 7 translates εἶδος without further ado as *Bedeutung* (meaning). This translation renders correctly the particular use of the word in this context, but blurs the classical Form-Matter distinction which underlies Proclus' analysis of the nature of language. He contrasts the form of a word to its matter (ὕλη). He argues that the latter is based on convention. By the 'matter' of a word Proclus means its vocalization, the air modelled by the organs of speech like the tongue. He uses θέσει as synonymous with τύχῃ (fate). He hastens to add that we should not consider fate as a cause deprived of reason (ἀλόγιστος αἰτία), but as a divine or daemonic power which leads our activities in the right direction. An example clarifies much of what Proclus has in mind. Take the names Hector and Astyanax.[29] According to Proclus, a philosopher will see that both names are about equal when it comes to their form and meaning (εἰς τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὸ σημαινόμενον). Proclus takes this example from *Crat.* 394bff., where Socrates, apparently in jest,[30] suggests that the two names mean the same, i.e. holder or ruler, of the city. However, as far as their matter and letters (εἰς τὴν ὕλην καὶ τὰς συλλάβας) are concerned they appear to be different.[31]

The fact that there is a certain likeness between ὀνόματα and the things they refer to as far as their form is concerned is of importance for the theurgical potential of the former. How do they function in the context of theurgy? Hirschle[32] distinguishes three types of names in Proclus: the first names (πρώτιστα ὀνόματα) occur on the level of the gods, the second names on the level of the daemons, while the third are names on the level of human beings. These first names do not represent reality, but are coexistent with the things themselves as they are present in the gods as causes. According to Hirschle, it follows that these first names are at the same time the causes of the things which the gods produce.[33] The daemonic names are the middle term between the divine and human names.[34] Although

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29 *In Crat.* § 80 p. 37, 22-25.

30 The Socratic irony is lost on Proclus, who takes Socrates' efforts in the field of etymology surprisingly seriously.

31 For Proclus' discussion in the *In Crat.* whether *onomata* are according to nature or convention, see Hirschle 1979: 4-11.

32 Hirschle 1979: 20-35 in a chapter entitled 'Die Stufen der ὀνόματα'.

33 Hirschle 1979: 23.

34 See Hirschle 1979: 25-28 on the daemonic names.

Hirschle complains that Proclus has very little to say about them, he is convinced that these are the names used in theurgy to call forth the gods. These names are revealed to the theurgists by the gods and daemons themselves. They were kept secret by the theurgists (*Geheimnamen*). Proclus does not give a single example of such a name. To this category of names belong the so-called *voces mysticae*, i.e. the completely meaningless sequences of vowels which can be found in magical papyri and which Iamblichus mentions in *Myst.* VII 4. By means of these the gods can be called forth during the rites. Finally, there are the human names, whose resemblance to reality just is tenuous, since they are so far removed from it.

What interests us most in the present context is of course the category of names which the theurgists use. As such, there is nothing strange about these names being so secret that Proclus does not reveal them in his philosophical writings. Hirschle refers to magical papyri which urge the reader to keep the magical names mentioned secret. However, in the context of the hymns the situation is different. When reading the hymns, one does not get the impression that they contain *Geheimnamen* or that Proclus left the magical names out when he wrote down the hymns. This could have been a possibility, for it is done in some of the magical papyri. Thus, it is most likely that these secret names have never been part of Proclus' hymns. However, this presents us with a problem. Suppose that Proclus knew these secret names, as Hirschle argues, why did he not use them in his hymns? After all, they would have rendered his hymns far more effective. Fear that they might fall into the hands of uninitiated people or, even worse, the downright enemies of pagan cult, the Christians, seems unlikely. If that had been the case, he should also have refrained from using symbolic myths in his hymns. As we have seen, he ascribes special powers to them, and it is for that particular reason that he urges his public not to divulge their knowledge about them at the end of the second of his two essays on symbolic poetry.[35] In order to solve this problem, I now propose a critical reconsideration of Hirschle's interpretation.

3.4.3 *Hirschle reconsidered*

It is my contention that Hirschle's reconstruction of Proclus' theory of naming is incorrect: theurgical names do not necessarily have to

[35] *In RP.* I 205, 23f.

be secret names, but can also be the names familiar to any reader of Greek myths. The evidence for this view can be found in *In Crat.* § 71 pp. 29, 21-35, 15. This section deals with the question whether there are names on the level of the gods or that the gods are beyond meaning (p. 29, 25f.: ἐπέκεινα τῆς τοιαύτης σημασίας). Here Proclus has the gods proper in mind, i.e. the henads which are ineffable (29, 28f.: τῶν τοίνυν θεῶν καὶ ὕπαρξιν ἐχόντων ἑνοειδῆ καὶ ἄρρητον). These gods cause the world, so everything depends on them and has their symbols. These symbols also cause the products to revert upon their causes.[36] They are above all thinking (31, 7: ὑπεραίρει πᾶσαν νόησιν), and thus ineffable. However, the creative powers diminish in the process of creation, as a result of which the unity which characterizes the henads is gradually replaced by plurality. The gods at the highest level may be ineffable in their uniformity but the plurality of their manifestations, i.e. the causative symbols, at lower levels makes them more and more utterable, until at our level they are perfectly utterable, although, of course, these names refer to only a shadow of a shadow of the real thing. Next, Proclus connects this story about the causative symbols with the names of the gods:

> **T. 5.4** Such are the above-mentioned symbols of the gods: in the higher regions they are uniform, whereas in the lower they are multiform. And theurgy, in imitation of this situation, puts the symbols forward by means of exclamations, albeit unarticulated ones. And the third class of symbols which have come down from the noeric realm to all the peculiar properties and emanated as far as us are the divine names, by means of which the gods are invoked and by means of which they are honoured in hymns. They have been revealed by the gods themselves and make us turn around towards them, and in as far as they are clear, they contribute to human knowledge.[37]

In the course of this paragraph, Proclus points out at which levels the different types of names are situated. The highest, ineffable symbols or names can be found on the level of the noetic gods and upwards. At this level one has to remain silent. The first utterable names

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[36] *In Crat.* § 71 p. 30, 24-25.

[37] *In Crat.* § 71 p. 31, 24-32, 3: τοιαῦτα δ' ἐστὶν τὰ καλούμενα σύμβολα τῶν θεῶν· μονοειδῆ μὲν ἐν τοῖς ὑψηλοτέροις ὄντα διακόσμοις, πολυειδῆ δ' ἐν τοῖς καταδεεστέροις· ἃ καὶ ἡ θεουργία μιμουμένη δι' ἐκφωνήσεων μέν, ἀδιαρθρώτων δέ, αὐτὰ προφέρεται. τὰ δὲ δὴ τρίτα καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν νοερῶν ὑποστάσεων ἐπὶ πάντα καθήκοντα ἰδιώματα καὶ μέχρις ἡμῶν προϊόντα τὰ ὀνόματά ἐστι τὰ θεῖα, δι' ὧν οἱ θεοὶ καλοῦνται καὶ οἷς ἀνυμνοῦνται, παρ' αὐτῶν τῶν θεῶν ἐκφανέντα καὶ εἰς αὐτοὺς ἐπιστρέφοντα, καὶ ὅσον ἐστὶν αὐτῶν φανόν, εἰς γνῶσιν ἀνθρωπίνην προάγοντα·

appear at the level below the noetic gods,[38] which is the noetic-and-noeric level (p. 32, 27: ἡ νοερὰ τῶν νοητῶν φύσις). I take that these names are the above-mentioned unarticulated sounds uttered by the theurgists. Proclus remarks that it is up to this level that theurgical ritual functions,[39] an important argument in favour of Anne Sheppard's tripartite division of theurgy (chapter IV § 4.3).

When we compare this account to Hirschle's reconstruction, we may conclude that he is right in assuming some relation between the causative process and three different categories of names. As for the first category on the level of the gods, I agree with him. I disagree with him, however, on role of the second and third categories. Hirschle equates the second category with the *voces mysticae*. This is in line with what Proclus says in **T. 5.4**. The unarticulated sounds uttered in theurgical rites seem to coincide with them. However, contrary to what Hirschle leads us to believe, they are not the only type of names used in theurgical contexts, for the third type, which consists of utterable names, is also used to invoke the gods and to praise them in hymns (ἀνυμνοῦνται). The kind of names one uses to invoke the gods seems to depend on the category of gods one wishes to invoke. Both categories of names are credited with special powers which bring us in contact with the divine.

Proclus gives an example of the third type of divine names. He explains that the same god may be invoked by means of different names by different peoples, for every people invokes a god according to its native tongue. All the same, these different names come all from the gods and all refer to the essence of the god in question. They also all have theurgical powers, although some more than others. As an example he gives the name of the god which the gods have taught the Greeks to call Briareos, whereas the Chaldaeans call him differently.[40] This example is taken from the *Cratylus*. There, Socrates draws attention to the fact that, according to Homer *Il.* 1, 403f. man calls this creature Aigaion, but the gods call it Briareos. From this it appears that the divine names can be the ordinary names from Greek mythology by which the gods are known to us.

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[38] *In Crat.* § 71 p. 32, 25: τὴν τῶν νοητῶν πρόοδον εἰς ταύτην ἀποπερατοῦσθαι τὴν τάξιν.

[39] *In Crat.* § 71 p. 32, 29f.: καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡ τελεστικὴ πᾶσα μέχρι ταύτης ἄνεισι τῆς τάξεως ἐνεργοῦσα θεουργικῶς. The intended *taxis* is the noetic-and-noeric one. I take the expression ἐνεργοῦσα θεουργικῶς to refer to the performance of ritual.

[40] *In Crat.* § 71 p. 32, 5-17.

3.4.4 *Divine names in the hyms*

Does Proclus use these divine names in his hymns? As he remarks in **T. 5.4**, divine names contribute to our knowledge of the gods since they originate from them. In the commentary on the *Cratylus*, Proclus thus sets himself the task of analysing certain divine names in order to bring to light the secret knowledge they contain. This process strongly resembles the symbolic interpretations he undertakes of the hymns by Homer and Hesiod. Among the names he analyses are Titan, the name by which Helios is invoked in the *H.* I 1,[41] Aphrodite, invoked in *H.* II 1 and V 1,[42] Hecate[43] and Zeus,[44] both invoked *H.* VI 2 and 3, and Pallas, invoked in *H.* VII 4.[45] Why do we not find those famous *voces mysticae* in the hymns? It could be that Proclus does not mention them in his other writings because he wanted to keep them secret. In case of the hymns, however, the answer is, I think, that he had no need for them. As we have seen, these *voces mysticae* belong to the gods who come right after the noetic gods. The gods invoked by Proclus, however, are mostly leader-gods and do not pass the level of the demiurgic Nous. I conclude, then, that the use of these names is in itself a theurgical technique of attracting the gods by means of symbols. Hirschle missed this point in his study.

3.5 *Material symbols*

There is but one reference to a material symbol in the hymns.[46] In the hymn to Athena, Proclus invokes Athena thus: 'You, who obtained the Acropolis on the high-crested hill, a symbol (σύμβολον), mistress, of the top of your great series' (vss. 21-22). What has this to do with theurgy? Just as animals, plants and stones can be *symbola* to which a certain god may feel *sympatheia*, so it is for whole regions. Such a region contains symbols of its patron deity. This shall be discussed in detail in the commentary to these verses. Athena was in

[41] *In Crat.* § 106 p. 56, 11-23.

[42] *In Crat.* § 183, p. 109, 22ff.

[43] *In Crat.* § 179 p. 106, 25-107, 11 (not so much an explanation of the name as a discussion about her place in the divine hierarchy).

[44] *In Crat.* § 101 p. 52, 4-8.

[45] *In Crat.* § 185 p. 112, 4-16.

[46] The fact that there only one reference to a material *symbolon* in the hymns does not say much about the handling of material *symbola* during the singing of the hymn. In the case of the so-called Orphic hymns for example, it is indicated what materials should be burnt while singing the hymns. However, the hymns themselves contain no references to the burning of these materials.

any case the goddess of Athens, and Proclus apparently considered the acropolis to be a *symbolon*. The Neoplatonic Academy, the place where Proclus lived and worked, was situated at the very foot of the Athenian Acropolis and it seems to me very likely that it was at the same spot that the hymn to Athena was recited.

4. *The ritual context of the hymns*

In this chapter I have tried to understand the hymns as some sort of theurgy. In the preceding chapter on theurgy, we saw that ritual was an important constituent of this practice. So the question arises in what context Proclus' hymns were performed. Should we imagine Proclus composing his hymns for his own private use, or for the use of others, like his pupils as Wilamowitz suggested in the case of *H.* VII to Athena?[47] And if they were performed in rites, what kind of rites should we think of? Cultic rites? Or were they, like (perhaps) the Orphic hymns, part of so-called literary mysteries? In the case of the latter kind of mysteries, it is enough just to read a text in order to be initiated in some wisdom, but in the case of the former kind, ritual acts too are needed.[48]

To start with the first question, in one case it is clear that Proclus composed a hymn solely for his own use: *H.* V to the Lycian Aphrodite. In this hymn, as we pointed out above in § 3.2, Proclus asks the Lycian Aphrodite to help him, 'for I myself too am of Lycian blood' (vs. 13). We have pointed out that this line served to activate the ties of sympathy between this deity and Proclus. It is clear that it would be nonsense for most of Proclus' students to repeat after him that they were Lycians, for they were not. Besides, it would be in vain. They could never establish a bond of sympathy between this deity and themselves, for they did not stand in a special causal relationship to that specific Aphrodite. This is, I think, the only indisputable case. *H.* VII to Athena seems also to have a personal element — see vs. 42: 'I profess to belong to you' — especially when one realizes that Proclus was considered by Marinus to belong to the series of Athena because he was born in Byzantium (see my commentary *ad loc.*). As for

[47] Wilamowitz 1907: 274.

[48] For the Orphic hymns as part of literary mysteries as opposed to cultic mysteries, see Brisson 1990: 2930. He bases the opposition between cultic and literary mysteries on Boulanger 1935: 124.

Wilamowitz' idea that this hymn was meant for students leaving the school and settling in the world, his arguments do not carry much conviction; see my commentary to vs. 47. All the same, it is very possible that all members of the Academy considered themselves to be servants of Athena and could thus profess to be hers. As for the other hymns, there is no reason why another member of the Academy could not repeat them. From Marinus *Vita Procli* § 19, we learn that Proclus composed hymns for the celebration of festivals of Greek and foreign gods, as his collection of hymns would reveal (ἡ τῶν ὕμνων αὐτοῦ πραγματεία). What we may infer from this remark is that Proclus composed at least some of his hymns for public use. It is possible that our selection of hymns was part of the aforementioned collection of hymns, so perhaps even some of our hymns were performed at these occasions.

This remark also indicates that Proclus' hymns were not just literary but could be part of a ritual as well. It was not enough just to read the hymns in a quiet corner. This view is corroborated by the scanty information we can gather about Neoplatonic religious practice. In the by now familiar text *Chal. Phil.* Fr. 2, Proclus warns us that a hymn to the Father should not consist of words or rites, which implies a strong connection between hymns and rites. According to Marinus *Vita Procli* § 17, as soon as Proclus learnt that someone of his friends or acquaintances had fallen ill, he went to make supplications to the gods on behalf of the patient 'by sacrifices and hymns' (ἱκέτευεν ἔργοις τε καὶ ὕμνοις). About Proclus' star pupil Asclepiodotus of Alexandria, to whom he dedicated the commentary on the *Parmenides*,[49] Damascius *Vita Isid.* Fr. 209, p. 179, 6-7 writes that he 'adorned statues and contributed hymns to them' (ἀγάλματά τε διακοσμῶν καὶ ὕμνους προτιθείς) in honour of the gods, thus linking ritual worship of statues to hymn-singing. We could easily imagine Proclus in the same way worshipping the statues of Athena and the Mother of the Gods found near his house while reciting *H.*VII and VI.

According to Marinus *Vita Procli* § 28, Proclus made use of the Chaldaean συστάσεις and ἐντυχίαι. Lewy 1978²: 228f. discusses this passages and explains that the συστάσεις, 'conjunctions', were meant to establish a conjunction with a god or a daemon in order to be able

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[49] It is difficult to distiguish this Asclepiodotus from another younger relative, see Goulet *s.v.* 'Asclepiodote d'Alexandrie' in the *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques* vol. I; Athanassiadi 1999: 348f.

to perform a theurgical act for which the assistance of the divine was needed. These rites of conjunction included certain rites as well as prayers. The term σύστασις is even often applied to the prayer which effects the conjunction. The term ἐντυχία is, unlike the former, not specifically magical. According to Lewy (*o.c.* p. 239) it designates a supplicatory prayer in the course of Chaldaean rites. Little is known about these kinds of prayers. Proclus may have composed some of his hymns for these occasions, but this suggestion is doomed to remain mere speculation.

In the hymns, the singing of hymns is connected with purifying rites. According to *H.* IV 4, the human soul is cleansed by means of ineffable rites consisting of hymns. The correctness of this verse is disputed. Some prefer to change the text from τελετῇσι ὕμνων (rites consisting of hymns) into ὑμῶν (your, i.e. of the gods invoked, rites). However, I see no compelling reason to opt for the latter reading.[50] I have not been able to connect them to any specific rites. The verse suggests at least that hymns were performed in a ritualistic setting.

All in all, we may conclude that Proclus sang hymns during rites. Because of the scanty evidence, it is, however, impossible to determine whether the specific hymns which have come down to us were sung in a ritual context, let alone during a specific stage of Chaldaean rituals. In the case of *H.* V, this seems even rather unlikely.

Here we face a potential objection. Admitted that many gods who are invoked in the hymns are traditional Greek gods who have little to do with Chaldaean lore, can we still maintain that the hymns are a form of theurgy? To my mind we still can, because the Neoplatonists did not exclusively associate theurgy with Chaldaean initiations. Already Festugière (1966: 1581f.), discussing Proclus' attitude towards traditional religion, observed that the later Neoplatonists linked theurgy firmly with traditional religion. He points especially to a passage from Marinus' *Vita Procli* (§§ 28-34), where the latter discusses Proclus' theurgical excellence (ἡ θεουργικὴ ἀρετή). In this context he mentions not only the fact that Proclus attended Chaldaean meetings, but also a miraculous healing which Proclus brought about by praying to Asclepius in his temple (§ 29), Proclus' familiarity with Athena, Asclepius (§§ 30-32), Pan, and the Mother of the Gods (§ 33) and what miraculous things came from these privileged relations. None of these gods play any role in Chaldaean rituals. Nevertheless,

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[50] For a discussion of this problem, see my commentary to this verse.

Marinus concludes (§ 34) that these things 'resulted from Proclus' possession of theurgical excellence' (ἀπὸ τῆς θεουργικῆς αὐτοῦ ἀρετῆς). Festugière (*o.c.* p. 1582) therefore rightly concludes: '*Il est donc clair que Marinos établit un lien entre la théurgie et la religion traditionelle*'.

He finds the same link in Hierocles *in Carm. Aur.* § 26, p. 118, 10 f. ed. Koehler where the cults of the city (τὰ τῶν πόλεων ἱερά) are considered as good examples of theurgy. We may add to this a similar remark by Hermeias *In Phdr.* 99, 14-19 who appears to consider 'the cults of statues by the law of the city and according to native customs' (τὰς θεραπείας τῶν ἀγαλμάτων νόμῳ πόλεως καὶ κατὰ τὰ οἰκεῖα πάτρια) as the most common type of theurgy.[51] In fact, already Iamblichus had connected traditional Greek religion with theurgy. In *Myst.* III 11, for example, he explains how Apollo's oracles in Colophon, Delphi and Branchidai function in accordance with his general theory about theurgy. Nor should we assume that the gods of the Chaldaean Oracles existed isolated from the other gods, as Proclus' hymns show. *H.* I is directed primarily to Helios, a god with a clear Chaldaean background. All the same he appears to be related to such gods like Apollo, Paiêon, Dionysus, Attis and Adonis. *H.* VI is directed to Hecate, perhaps the most important goddess for the theurgist, together with Rhea and Ianus-Zeus, who both have little to do with the Chaldaean pantheon.

In short, the technique of attracting the benevolence of the gods by means of *symbola* may have been pivotal to the Chaldaean mysteries, but the Neoplatonists were happy to apply it in the case of traditional gods too.

5. *Conclusion: what the hymns teach us about theurgy*

In this chapter, I have examined to what extent Proclus put theurgical theory into practice in his hymns. As for his treatment of prayer in the commentary on the *Timaeus*, it appeared that this theory had little influence on the composition of his hymns. This is hardly surprising given the fact that the prayer described in the commentary aims at unification with the divine henads, whereas the hymns aim at

[51] Sheppard 1982: 218 cites this passage as an example of theurgy of the lowest form (cf. chapter IV § 4.3).

contact with lower classes of gods. All the same, Proclus uses theurgical techniques in his hymns by using different kinds of symbols (innate symbols, divine myths, names and material symbols) in order to activate the ties of sympathy between god and man. As for the setting in which the hymns were used, it is difficult to say anything for sure. My guess is that at least some of them were recited in combination with rituals.

Given the fact that the hymns are theurgical, at least as far as the techniques used in them is concerned, do we gain a better understanding of Proclean theurgy by studying the hymns? To start with, they give us some impression of theurgy in action. In Proclus' writings we read about the special powers of certain myths, divine names, and objects like stones. Here, we can see Proclus actually using them in his hymns.

Secondly, the hymns also allow us to elaborate on Anne Sheppard's tripartite division of Proclean theurgy. As we have seen (chapter IV § 4.3), she distinguished theurgy which makes use of ritual from a higher kind of theurgy which does not and which aims at the Plotinian mystical experience. She divides ritual theurgy into a kind of white magic and theurgy which activates us intellectually. When we look at the hymns, we find no trace of that higher theurgy. This does not surprise us, for as we pointed out in the previous chapter, Proclus himself stresses that all rites and all hymns are useless in the search for unification with the henads. However, both the lowest and middle type of theurgy seems to be present in the hymns. On the one hand, as appeared in the chapter on the gods invoked in Proclus' hymns, Proclus hopes to be taken to the level of Nous by these leader-gods. Sheppard suspects that the rites involved in this type of theurgy aim at purification. *H.* IV 4 mentions indeed purification by means of the initiation rites of the hymns, but at the same time it is clear that the ritual in so far as it consists of hymn-singing also aims at unification. On the other hand, the hymns also contain prayers for, e.g., health (*H.* I 42; VI 5-6; VII 43-46), fame (*H.* I 43; III 17; VII 48), prosperity (*H.* VI 4-5; VII 48), i.e. external goods which have apparently little to do with the philosophical life. I conclude therefore that there is a sharp distinction between theurgy of the highest class and the two lower classes, whereas the two latter two may be mixed together.

CHAPTER SIX

TYPES OF POETRY

1. *Introduction*

In the previous chapter we have seen that Proclus' hymns contain symbolism. This symbolism is not just a matter of allegory, but also of theurgy. It goes without saying that Proclus did not believe that all poetry is symbolic and imbued with theurgical powers. This chapter is dedicated to the two other types of poetry he distinguishes: scientific and mimetic poetry. First we shall focus on Proclus' sixth essay on Plato's *Republic*. This is his prime treatment of poetry. The discussion serves two purposes: on the one hand, to place what has been said in the previous chapter about symbolic poetry in a broader context; on the other hand, to elaborate on the other two types of poetry in order to provide the necessary background for the treatment of the central issue of this chapter: to what extent are the other two types of poetry present in the hymns? I shall then proceed to discuss scientific poetry. Its nature seems to me to be not very well understood. Even if this type of poetry appears to be of limited relevance to the study of the hymns, I hope that the present discussion may contribute to our understanding of Proclus' theory of poetry in general. Finally, I shall say a few things about mimetic poetry in relation to the hymns in so far as emotions are involved.

2. *Proclus on poetry*

2.1 *The issue: Plato's criticism of Homer*

Proclus presents his views on poetry in what is known as his *In Platonis Rempublicam commentarii.* This is not a running commentary on the whole of Plato's *Republic* as Proclus' commentaries on Plato's *Parmenides* and *Timaeus* are. In fact, it consists of a series of independent treatises on different parts and aspects of Plato's *Republic.* They were written at different times, on different occasions, and in different formats, including a line-by-line commentary on the myth of Er, as

well as essays and lectures. The fifth and sixth essays, both dealing with Plato's views on poetry, are an illustration in point.[1] The fifth essay seems to be designed as a schoolroom lecture suited for beginners (though not absolute ones) in the study of Plato,[2] whereas the sixth originates from a lecture for the inner circle of the Academy held in celebration of Plato's birthday. It contains all the intellectual fireworks one might expect from the Diadochus on such an occasion.

Both lectures focus on Plato's ambivalent attitude towards poetry. On the one hand, Plato appears to hold poets in high esteem, as is for example apparent from the discussion of divine *mania* in *Phdr.* 245a (cf. chapter III § 5). On the other, he drives them out of his ideal state which he sets out in the *Republic*. There, he rebukes Homer for two different reasons.[3] In *R.* 376d4ff. he blames Homer, Hesiod and others for making up indecent stories about gods and heroes, which have a corrupting effect on the religious convictions of the youth. Plato is referring here to stories like the one about the castration of Uranos by Cronos in Hesiod and the battles between the gods in Homer. In *R.* 598d7 ff., on the other hand, poetry is criticized as being mere *mimesis*, imitation. It depicts things in the material realm, which themselves are just images of the Forms. Thus, the poet presents third-degree images of reality. Moreover, poetry — especially tragedy and comedy — aim at stirring the emotions by means of imitation (*R.* 606a ff.). In this case, Plato blames poetry for contributing nothing to the philosophical quest for Truth. Instead it hampers these efforts by causing all kinds of emotions which only divert our attention from philosophy.

For a Neoplatonist of the Athenian school this was not just a scholarly puzzle. Some poets, especially Homer and Hesiod, were considered to be divinely inspired sages. Just as the gods had revealed

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[1] For the observation that the fifth and sixth essay must be considered as distinct units, composed at different times, with different purposes, and for different types of occasion, see Sheppard 1980: 15-21.

[2] For the nature of the fifth essay as a more basic treatise when compared to the sixth, cf. Sheppard 1979: 25 and Kuisma 1996: 71-2. Kuisma's qualification of the fifth as a public lecture as opposed to the sixth as a private one seems to me to be somewhat of an exaggeration. In Proclus' days, the Academy was a private institution run in a private, albeit spacious, house, not a public institution paid for by the state, like, e.g., the Imperial chairs of philosophy in Athens paid for by Hadrian had been. All lectures were thus private, although at different levels and for different groups of audiences.

[3] For the two different perspectives from which Plato criticizes Homer in the *Republic*, cf. Coulter 1976: 33f.

things unknowable to the human mind in the Chaldaean oracles, so they did through the mouths of these poets. Consequently, the Neoplatonists regarded them as members of the same tradition in which Plato stood. They had somehow to get rid of the apparent clash between two of their revered authorities. The fact that Plato appears to hold contradictory views about poetry was another puzzle that cried out for a solution. Any modern approach to such a problem, such as that Plato makes Socrates sometimes say things for the sake of the argumentation in a particular context of a dialogue which should not be expounded outside that context, or that the opinions voiced by the Socrates in the dialogues does not necessarily reflect Plato's own opinion, would be considered ridiculous in the eyes of a Neoplatonist interpreter. Plato was a medium which the gods had chosen to expound the doctrines concerning themselves. Therefore Plato had to be completely consistent with himself.

In what follows we shall especially concentrate on Proclus' solution to this problem as he presents it in the sixth essay. We shall see that he approaches the problem by dividing poetry into three types. First, however, we must say something about the fifth essay, because it seems to diverge from the division of poetry in the sixth. The fifth essay on the *Republic* consists of ten questions concerning Plato's remarks about poets and poetry. The fifth question runs thus: how are poetry and music related to each other and how many sorts of music are there according to Plato?[4] Proclus answers that there are four types of music. The first type of music is philosophy proper. It is clearly superior to the three other types of music. Next Proclus mentions the music that consists in possession by the Muses. It moves the souls to divine poetry. This kind of inspired poetry provides the young with examples of good deeds which they should try to imitate.[5] Furthermore, there is a kind of music that is not inspired by the gods, but all the same directs the attention of the soul towards them. By means of audible harmonies it awakens in the soul a love for the beauty of the divine Harmony in the same way as bodily beauty awakens love for the divine beauty. The fourth kind of music is the paideutic musical art. It teaches which accords and which rhythms are best suited to mould the human soul in the best way possible. To

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[4] *In RP.* I 56, 20ff.

[5] For the second type of music and the poetry related to it, see *In RP.* I 57, 23-58, 27.

this kind of music belongs another kind of uninspired poetry.[6] So in the fifth essay we have two sorts of poetry connected with two forms of music instead of three. Moreover, as will appear below, the type of inspired poetry seems to encompass what are two distinct kinds of poetry in the sixth.

According to Anne Sheppard, the scheme presented in the sixth essay reflects an original development in Proclus' thought, whereas the fifth essay is the product of Syrianus' teachings. She stresses that this does not mean that Proclus rejects Syrianus, but rather that he elaborates on him.[7] If she is right, we should make a restriction here for the validity of our attempts to link Proclus' theory of poetry as discussed in the sixth essay to his hymns. Whatever we say about this connection would rest on the assumption that the hymns were composed after Proclus had rethought Syrianus' teachings. Since it is impossible to pinpoint the exact date of composition for either the sixth essay or the individual hymns, this assumption cannot be proven. Nevertheless, I do not think that this should cause us too much concern, as long as we find the theory of the sixth essay compatible with what happens in the hymns.

2.2 *Three types of poetry*

According to the sixth essay, the three types of poetry are related to three forms of life of the human soul.[8] The first, most perfect form of life in the human soul is the 'one of the soul'.[9] In this state the human soul is linked to the gods (συνάπτεται τοῖς θεοῖς). Because of likeness (δι' ὁμοιότητος) to them it lives a life which is not that of itself, but that of the gods. It leaves its own nous behind it, while it awakens in itself the ineffable symbol of the divine unity, thus linking like to like, the light here to the light above, the one in itself to the One above all being and life.[10]

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6 *In RP.* I 59, 20-60, 6 for the fourth kind of music, see *o.c.* 60, 6-13, and the interpretation of Sheppard 1980: 18f. for the fact that a kind of uninspired poetry belongs to the fourth type of music.

7 Sheppard 1980: 95-103.

8 Discussions of Proclus three-tiered system of poetry can be found in Sheppard 1980: 162-202, Bouffartigue 1987 and Lamberton 1992; the latter two provide helpful schemes.

9 See e.g. *In RP.* I 177, 19f. (τὸ ἄρρητον σύνθημα τῆς τῶν θεῶν ἑνιαίας ὑποστάσεως); p. 177, 22f. (τὸ ἑνοειδέστατον τῆς οἰκείας οὐσίας τε καὶ ζωῆς).

10 *In RP.* I 177, 15-23.

This form of life is that of the ultimate mystical experience of the ultimate unification discussed in chapter III § 3. This form of life comes down to becoming like god as much as possible with the result that the soul surpasses the limitations of its own existence and lives the divine life instead. This is a matter of activating the innate symbol and linking the light of the soul to the divine light.

To this life of the soul corresponds a kind of poetry which 'installs the soul in the causes of being, making by some sort of ineffable unification the one that is being filled (i.e. with divine goods) identical to the one that is filling'.[11] This results in divinely inspired madness superior to temperance (*In RP.* I 178, 24f.: μανία μέν ἐστιν σωφροσύνης κρείττων),[12] comparable to the madness of inspired prophecy and that of love.[13] It is the kind of poetry inspired by the Muses. Plato discusses this kind of poetry in the *Phaedrus*, the *Ion*, and the *Laws*.[14]

Second[15] — inferior to the first way of life — comes the life of the soul which has descended from the enthusiastic, inspired, mode of life and turned back to itself. It is the existence according to science (ἐπιστήμη) full of discursive reasoning (πλήθη τῶν λόγων).[16] The poetry related to this kind of life, 'admired by people with good sense,' appears to have two objects: the being of the beings (τὴν οὐσίαν τῶν ὄντων) and morally applaudable deeds. Later on this 'being of beings' appears to entail notions about the incorporeal nature (περὶ τῆς ἀσωμάτου φύσεως νοήματα)[17] and likely opinions about corporeal substance (περὶ τῆς σωματικῆς ὑποστάσεως εἰκότα δόγματα).[18] Proclus, referring to the *Laws*, mentions Theognis as a

[11] *In RP.* I 178, 12ff. … ἐνιδρύουσα τὴν ψυχὴν τοῖς αἰτίοις τῶν ὄντων, κατὰ τινά τε ἕνωσιν ἄρρητον εἰς ταὐτὸν ἄγουσα τῷ πληροῦντι τὸ πληρούμενον …

[12] The source of the expression is Plato *Phdr.* 244d3-5.

[13] On divine madness, see chapter III § 5.

[14] For Proclus' treatment of the *Phaedrus*, see *In RP.* I 180, 10-182, 20; for the Ion *In RP.* I 182, 21-185, 7; for the Laws, see *In RP.* I 185, 8-186, 21.

[15] Bouffartigue 1987: 133 claims that Sheppard 1980: 182 assumes that Proclus divides inspired poetry into two different types of inspired poetry, which would make the present type the third one after the two inspired ones. He argues against this. However, Sheppard does not claim such a thing, neither here nor anywhere else. All she does is argue that in the sixth essay Proclus splits the inspired poetry of the fifth essay into the inspired type and the non-inspired type now under discussion.

[16] *In RP.* I 177, 23-178, 2.

[17] *In RP.* I 186, 24.

[18] *In RP.* I 186, 25-6; cf. the descripton of the *Timaeus* (the dialogue about corporeal hypostasis) as an εἰκότα μῦθον (*Ti.* 29d2). Brisson 1994: 104 comments on this Platonic expression: 'C'est celui qui a pour object le vraisemblable (εἰκός),

poet concerned with these morally applaudable deeds.[19] Some passages from Homer too belong to this type of poetry.

Third comes the type of life which has turned itself away from the intellectual life altogether. It is the life of the soul concerned with fantasies and irrational sense-perception and fills itself completely with inferior beings.[20] The poetry that goes with it is a mixture of mere opinions (δόξαι) and fantasies (φαντασίαι). It is nothing else than imitation (οὐδὲν ἀλλ' ἢ μιμητική), which inflates the smallest passions (εἰς ὄγκον μὲν ἐπαίρουσα τὰ σμικρὰ τῶν παθημάτων), especially feelings of joy and misery (χαίρειν καὶ λυπεῖσθαι). Such is in fact its chief goal. Within this type of poetry two different forms may be distinguished. One form (τὸ εἰκαστικόν) consists in copying reality as precisely as possible; the other (τὸ φανταστικόν) only suggests an imitation, but is in reality mere fantasy.[21]

2.3 *Proclus' defence of Homer*

Proclus' triple division of poetry is the basis of his defence of Homer against the allegations brought in against him by Socrates in the *Republic*. Socrates' first objection against poetry, as corrupting a non-philosophical audience of youngsters, only applies to the lowest type of poetry. This type of poetry is therefore rightly banned from the model state. However, these things have nothing to do with the two other types of poetry, the inspired and scientific ones. Although all three types of poetry are present in Homer, the inspired type is predominant. His poetry is therefore immune to the reproaches of being just *mimesis* and aiming at stirring up emotions.[22] Moreover, Proclus claims that this triple classification of poetry can be based on remarks by Plato on poetry throughout his writings.[23] This implies that Plato is not inconsistent with himself when it comes to poetry, but that different valuations of poetry refer to different types of poetry.

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c'est-à-dire ce qui effectivement est l'image (εἰκών) du monde des formes intelligibles'. As we shall see (§ 3.1), these *eikones* play an important role in scientific poetry.

[19] *In RP.* I 186, 22-187, 24.

[20] *In RP.* I 178, 4f.: φαντασίαις τε καὶ αἰσθήσεσιν ἀλόγοις προσχρωμένην καὶ πάντῃ τῶν χειρόνων ἀναπιμλαμένην.

[21] *In RP.* I 179, 15-32.

[22] For this, see esp. *In RP.* I 196, 14-199, 28.

[23] *In RP.* I 180, 1ff.

This move does not solve the entire problem. Plato also objected against poetry that it does not contribute anything to our knowledge. It only presents us with the depiction of an image of reality. According to Proclus, this may hold true for the lowest form of poetry, which is mimetic in essence, but certainly not for the highest, inspired, form of poetry. As we have seen, the divine inspiration of the poet is identical to the illumination of the theurgist. In both cases, the inspired men are unified to the gods. As we explained in the chapter IV § 3, mere philosophizing is not enough to comprehend the gods. Our intellectual capacities fall short in doing so. We have to be elevated out of our human condition and be made like the gods. The divine poet is in such a condition and may therefore supply us with divine wisdom in his poetry, just as the theurgists do in the Chaldaean Oracles. Does this mean that in the end we should take the scandalous stories about the Olympian gods in Homer at face value? Certainly not. Notwithstanding the fact that Plato had said in so many words that even an allegorical reading would do to excuse Homer and Hesiod,[24] this is exactly how Proclus reads these stories. In his opinion, the poets conceal their wisdom deliberately in seemingly provocative stories. According to Neoplatonic doctrine from Iamblichus onwards,[25] this is no disadvantage for them, but, on the contrary,

> **T. 6.1** [t]hat is exactly what lends the myths their special excellence, the fact that they bring nothing of the truth out among the profane, but that they just extend some traces of the complete mystagogy to those who are by nature capable of being led towards the contemplation inaccessible to the masses.[26]

Proclus quotes Plato *R.* 378a4-6 in support of his view that the content of the myths, if they are true, should not be vulgarized, but only be told to as few people as possible, and certainly not to the

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[24] *R.* 378d5f. : ... ὅσας Ὅμηρος πεποίκεν οὐ παραδεκτέον εἰς τὴν πόλιν, οὔτ' ἐν ὑπονοίαις πεποιημένας οὔτε ἄνευ ὑπονοιῶν.

[25] Bouffartigue 1992: 337-345 shows that it was Iamblichus who initiated the idea that seemingly indecent myths in particular constituted the perfect mystagogy for the spiritual happy few. In this, he diverged from Porphyry who held that myths only deal with inferior gods and daemons. Bouffartigue goes on to show that Iamblichus thus exercised influence on later Neoplatonists like the emperor Julian and Proclus.

[26] *In RP.* I 74, 20-24: καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν, ὃ μάλιστα ἐξαίρετον αὐτοῖς ἀγαθὸν ὑπάρχει, τὸ μηδὲν τῶν ἀληθῶν εἰς τοὺς βεβήλους ἐκφέρειν, ἀλλ' ἴχνη τινὰ μόνον τῆς ὅλης μυσταγωγίας προτείνειν τοῖς ἀπὸ τούτων εἰς τὴν ἄβατον τοῖς πολλοῖς θεωρίαν περιάγεσθαι πεφυκόσιν.

youngsters who are not yet ready for them.[27] It is for that reason, Proclus explains, that Plato composed his own myths, which he inserted in his writings. These myths do not contain offensive elements. Both types of myths teach about the nature of the divine, but those by Plato in a more philosophical way, aiming at a young audience, whereas those by Homer in a way appropriate to theurgical rites,[28] aiming at those who have already gone through an elaborate training and education, and who now wish to plant the nous of their soul — as it were a kind of mystical organ — in the recitation of these myths.[29]

3. *The second type of poetry: images versus symbols*

3.1 *Sheppard's interpretation of scientific poetry*

The second type of poetry — the one concerned with *episteme* — has not received much scholarly attention. Anne Sheppard opposes this 'scientific' poetry to symbolic poetry as follows: Inspired poetry conveys 'truths about the divine world in allegorical form.'[30] Scientific poetry on the other hand 'presents either facts about the physical world or ethical precepts. In either case it tells the reader what is true and morally commendable in a straightforward way, without allegory.' Later on she broadens the scope of this type of poetry somewhat as also including 'the lower ranges of metaphysics,'[31] without defining what these lower ranges of metaphysics might be. Following up a remark by Festugière, she guesses that the poetry of the Presocratics like Parmenides and Empedocles belongs to this class.[32] For that reason she called it didactic poetry at the time.[33] I shall be referring to it as scientific. Her contention is that its concept is of Proclus' own making. Moreover, she claims that it is the odd one out when compared to inspired and mimetic poetry. For, contrary to inspired and mimetic poetry, it 'is poetry which teaches directly,

[27] *In RP.* I 79, 27ff.
[28] For the relation between theurgical rites and myths, see e.g. **T. 5.3**.
[29] *In RP.* I 76, 17-79, 18.
[30] Sheppard 1980: 163.
[31] Sheppard 1980: 182.
[32] Sheppard 1980: 163, 185.
[33] Sheppard 1980: 97, 182-187; she informs me that she would now prefer not to use that name, accepting Beierwaltes' criticisms (1985[a]: 207) of her use of it.

without the use of representation of any kind. This distinction is really more important than the distinction in terms of subject-matter.'[34] By representation Sheppard means that mimetic poetry as an imitation of reality represents it directly, whereas the symbolic mode represents reality indirectly through symbols.[35] Her interpretation of this type of poetry as didactic has been quite influential.[36]

Sheppard's claim that scientific poetry does not use representation cannot easily be reconciled with her observation that this poetry may employ εἰκόνες (here translated as 'images') to represent higher reality, as she shows herself to be aware of.[37] These *eikones* are rather problematic things. What exactly is an *eikon*, especially as opposed to the symbols of inspired poetry? Furthermore, do we have clear evidence that we should indeed connect them to scientific poetry? Sheppard postulates this only tentatively, since there is no direct evidence for this assumption in the sixth essay.

In this section I propose to rethink the concept of scientific poetry in Proclus as well as the related notion of εἰκόνες. It will be argued (1) that scientific poetry does indeed represent reality through images, but (2) that scientific poetry is not at odds with the other types of poetry, and (3) that *H*. I (to Helios) is an example of this type of this kind of poetry.

3.2 *A preliminary discussion of the concept eikon*

3.2.1 *Distinguishing* eikones *from* symbola*: likeness versus unlikeness?*

There is a general tendency to assume that the difference between the symbols of inspired poetry and images is that symbols are unlike the entities they refer to, whereas images are like them.[38] This seems

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34 Sheppard 1980: 183.

35 Sheppard 1980: 97.

36 See e.g. Lamberton 1986: 191, Bouffartigue 1987: 135f., and Kamesar 1997: 184ff., who claims that Proclus' idea of didactic poetry takes its inspiration from Peripatetic literary theory.

37 Sheppard 1980: 200.

38 See e.g. Sheppard 1980: 199: '*Analogia* (Sheppard takes analogy as representing the iconic mode, RMB) then is a matter of representing something on a higher level of reality by something on a lower level which is like it. This is to be distinguished from symbolism where there is no resemblance between symbol and the object symbolised.' cf. Sheppard 1995: 343; Trouillard 1981: 299: 'On voit que l'essence du symbole est, à la différence de l'image, de proposer sa signification à travers une inversion, de substituer à l'analogie la correspondance des opposés.'; Trimpi 1983: 216: 'it is the very purpose of symbols to indicate the nature of reality by representing what is most antithetical to it.' He opposes (p. 216 n. 51) an icon as

to be a neat and clear-cut distinction. However, it will appear to involve several complications. In this paragraph I shall first outline this distinction in order to reject it in the next. Aim of this discussion is to show the need of rethinking the concept of *eikon* and to lay the foundations of a new interpretation in connection with scientific poetry.

The key passage for the assumption that symbols are characterized by unlikeness is *In RP.* I 198, 15-19:

> **T. 6.2** For symbols are not imitations of the things which they symbolize. For it is impossible that opposites could ever be imitations of their opposites, like what is shameful could never be the imitation of what is noble, and what is contrary to nature could never be the imitation of what is according to nature. But the symbolic mode hints at the nature of things even through their extreme opposites.[39]

Proclus makes this remark in his defence of Homer against the Platonic reproach that poetry is just an imitation of a material image of transcendent reality. Proclus argues that Plato did not have the Homeric myths in mind when he made this remark. Take the story of the adultery of Aphrodite and Ares in the *Iliad*. Adultery is something shameful. However, the philosophical reader of Homer understands that we should not deduce from this that the gods would ever do such an indecent thing. He understands that this story should on the contrary be interpreted symbolically. In fact it indicates (ἐνδείκνυται) something beautiful: the functioning of the principles of causation in the universe.[40]

Symbols are thus associated with unlikeness. Images on the other hand are supposed to be characterized by likeness in respect to the realities they depict. The fact that images bear a certain likeness towards their *paradeigmata* is already implied by the definition of the word. The word designates a reflection of something, like a picture or a statue or an image in a mirror reflects a certain person.[41] A

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a 'mimetic likeness' and the 'antithetical symbol'; Steel 1986: 196 speaks of a fundamental difference ('fundamenteel verschil') between icon, which preserves a certain likeness and symbol, which does not.

[39] τὰ γὰρ σύμβολα τούτων, ὧν ἐστι σύμβολα, μιμήματα οὐκ ἔστιν· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐναντία τῶν ἐναντίων οὐκ ἄν ποτε μιμήματα γένοιτο, τοῦ καλοῦ τὸ αἰσχρόν, καὶ τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν τὸ παρὰ φύσιν· ἡ δὲ συμβολικὴ θεωρία καὶ διὰ τῶν ἐναντιωτάτων τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων ἐνδείκνυται φύσιν.

[40] For the interpretation of this story, see *In RP.* I 141, 4ff.

[41] Cf. Dillon 1976: 250: 'For an *eikon*, in fact, 'reflecting' should be the key word. An *eikon* is, after all, properly a mirror-image, or a direct representation, of an original, its *paradeigma*, whereas a *symbolon* merely 'fits together' with some

passage in which Proclus discusses Platonic myths, opposing them to Homeric symbolic myths, may serve as an illustration. Contrary to Homer, Plato teaches about the gods by means of certain images (*In RP*. I 73, 17: διά τινων εἰκόνων), which contain none of the repulsive elements of Homeric myths. These images are as it were statues (*o.c.* 73, 21: οἷον ἀγάλματα) and likenesses (*o.c.* 73, 22: ὁμοιώματα) of the gods. It seems impossible that such an image could ever involve an extreme opposite, as a symbol apparently can.

Let me add one remark about the translation and interpretation of **T. 6.2**. It seems to me that most scholars are inclined to translate the text in a way that it supports as fully as possible the claim that the essence of symbolism is its antithetical nature.[42] The Greek reads:

> ἡ δὲ συμβολικὴ θεωρία καὶ διὰ τῶν ἐναντιωτάτων τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων ἐνδείκνυται φύσιν.

The vital point here is how one renders καί. Most translations seem either just to ignore it or take it to reinforce the superlative ἐναντιωτάτων. However, if it were to reinforce the superlative, one would expect καὶ to have been put in front of that superlative, not in front of διά. The most natural way to render the Greek as it stands is that the symbolic mode hints at the nature of things 'even through their extreme opposites' or 'through extreme opposites too.' This implies that the symbolic mode *may* hint at reality by means of opposites, but not necessarily so. A few scholars indeed read the remark in this way.[43]

The fact that symbolism may hint at reality through extreme opposites is all Proclus needs for the point he wishes to make in the present context. He seeks to prove that Homer's symbolic poetry is not mimetic in nature: the opposite of a thing can never ever be its imitation (μίμημα) (strong negation by means of a negated potential optative). In some cases symbolism uses complete opposites to refer

corresponding reality in a higher realm', see also L.S.J. *s.v.* εἰκών.

[42] Most evident in Trimpi 1983: 215: 'But it is the essence of symbolization to indicate the nature of the real by what is most strongly anthithetical to it.' Compare also Festugière *In RP*. vol. I 1970: 215: 'Or, la doctrine symbolique indique la natue du réel par les oppositions même les plus forts'; Coulter 1976: 50f.: 'For symbolic wisdom hints at the nature of reality through the medium of elements totally contrary in their nature'; Trouillard 1981: 299: 'Or, la doctrine symbolique indique la natue du réel à travers les extrêmes opposés.'

[43] Sheppard 1980: 197 paraphrasing this line: 'Symbolism can represent things even by their opposites.' Lamberton 1986: 190, also referring to the same passage: ''Symbols are not imitations of that which they symbolize.' On the contrary, symbols may be just the opposite of that which they symbolize.'

to things. Conclusion: symbolism cannot be essentially mimetic, as opposed to mimetic poetry.

It is true that the examples of symbolic exegesis listed in the sixth essay are examples of gods doing apparently shameful things whereas in fact the opposite is the case. However, this does not support the claim that symbols are essentially opposites of the things hinted at. The examples of symbolic poetry dealt with in the sixth essay constitute a specific selection. These are all passages referred to by Plato in the *Republic* as testimonies for the fact that Homer presents a corrupted impression of the gods. In accordance with the overall aim of the sixth essay to save Homer from Plato's criticism Proclus has to interpret away these offensive elements, i.e. the descriptions of the gods that are in opposition to their actual nature.

3.2.2 *The distinction likeness versus unlikeness rejected*

The suggestion that the difference between symbols and images is one of likeness as opposed to unlikeness is appealing for its apparent simplicity. However, Dillon's old observation[44] that it is plainly only when he is on his very best behaviour that Proclus maintains any distinction between the term *symbolon* and *eikon* should have been a warning. It is an understatement to say that the distinction between the two is somewhat fluid. Proclus even appears to use them as downright synonyms.[45] If both terms are each others opposites, it is hard to see how they could ever be used indiscriminately. It rather suggests that they have much in common. I shall now argue that images too inherently contain an element of unlikeness, whereas symbols contain necessarily an element of likeness. For this reason symbols may even be called 'images', as we shall see at the end of this paragraph.

Likeness does not only entail similarity of one thing to another, but also dissimilarity. Otherwise things would be typologically identical. Take for example a lifelike statue of Socrates as something that displays likeness to Socrates. Both image (*eikon*) and *paradeigma* will show a bearded face with protruding eyes and a snub nose. All the same there are notable differences between the image of Socrates

[44] Dillon 1976: 254.

[45] See e.g. *In Euclid.* 128, 26 the angle is a symbol and an image (σύμβολον καὶ εἰκόνα) of the coherence that obtains in the higher realm of divine things; *In Alc.* 25, 10f.: symbols (συμβόλων) have the power to be images of things (τὴν δύναμιν ἀπεικονιζόμενον); *In RP.* II 247, 9f.: the crowned heads of the Moirai in the myth of Er should be understood συμβολικῶς for their heads are εἰκόνες of divine powers.

and Socrates himself. To mention the most important one: the image is a dumb lifeless piece of marble whereas the other is living flesh and blood, always willing to enter into discussion.

The inherent unlikeness of *eikones* did not escape Proclus' subtle mind. In the commentary on the *Parmenides*, he spells it out for us that *eikones* have to be to some degree unlike their *paradeigmata*:

> **T. 6.3** This is the nature of an *eikon*, that together with likeness to its *paradeigma* it reveals also its unlikeness to it. Likeness alone makes another *paradeigma*, not an *eikon*, and unlikeness alone, in removing likeness, does away with the *eikon's* likeness. It is therefore necessary, if anything is to be an *eikon* of something else, that there is both likeness and unlikeness.[46]

To be sure, this was by no means a startling new insight. Proclus himself refers to Plato, probably to *Crat.* 432c: 'a perfect likeness, as Plato says, makes it impossible to see the *eikon* as the *eikon* and leads to the conclusion that *paradeigma* and *eikon* are the same'[47]

In the case of symbols, on the other hand, we need a certain amount of likeness for two reasons:

1. *Theurgy is based on likeness.* It will be remembered from chapter V § 3.3 that myths are theurgical symbols. The basis of theurgy is the likeness between a symbol and the god to which it belongs. Now, if literary symbolism was indeed to be characterized by unlikeness, this would be at odds with Proclus' general theory of theurgy. This seems not very likely, especially not since Proclus refers to this theory in his discussion of the three modes of life of the soul to which the three modes of poetry are related. As we have seen in § 2.2, the perfect form of life is the one in which the human soul is linked to the gods, because of its likeness to them. This likeness originates from the one of the soul, the innate symbol of the soul which refers to the divine Henads.

2. *Symbols could not refer to other things if they had nothing in common with the things they were supposed to refer to.* Without anything in common the two would become completely disconnected and the symbols would cease to be symbols. Proclus is aware of this. In **T. 6.2** he observes that symbols may hint at things through their extreme

[46] *In Parm.* II 743, 14-21 (trans. Morrow/Dillon 1987: 116 slightly adapted): τοιαύτη γὰρ ἡ εἰκὼν, μετὰ τῆς πρὸς τὸ παράδειγμα ὁμοιότητος καὶ τὴν ἀνομοιότητα παρεμφαίνουσα· ἥ τε γὰρ ὁμοιότης μόνον παράδειγμα ποιεῖ καὶ τοῦτο ἀντὶ εἰκόνος, ἥ τε ἀνομοιότης πάλιν ἀφαιρουμένη τὴν ὁμοίωσιν ἀφανίζει τὴν ὁμοιότητα τῆς εἰκόνος· δεῖ οὖν, ἵνα γένηται εἰκὼν ἄλλη ἄλλου, καὶ ὁμοίωσιν εἶναι καὶ ἀνομοίωσιν.

[47] *In Parm.* II 744, 9-11.

opposites. It is important to note that he talks about opposites, not about mere unlike things. In the latter case the link between symbol and the thing symbolised is lost. Pairs of opposites, on the other hand, have something in common and may thus be said to be like each other in some respect or another.[48]

Proclus makes exactly this point in his efforts to counter Plato's criticism of Homer. Plato, according to Proclus, argues against Homeric symbolic mythology as follows. This mythology appears to have no resemblance to the gods. If myths are not to fall short completely of representing the truth, however, they need to have some resemblance to them.[49] Therefore, Homeric mythology is to be rejected. Proclus agrees with Plato that representations of reality need some form of resemblance even in case of symbolism. Symbolism may make use of extreme contraries but still this does not exclude likeness al together. It hints at the supra-natural being of the gods by means of what is against nature, to the divine which surpasses all reasoning by means of what is against reason, to what transcends all partial beauty by means of ugliness. 'And in this way, the makers of myths make us recall the transcending superiority of the gods by means of a likely account' (κατὰ λόγον τὸν εἰκότα).[50] Proclus thus rejects Plato's claim that the symbolic stories do not contain any resemblance to the gods at all. His argumentation appears to hinge precisely on the point that opposites have something in common, and therefore have some form of likeness: the supra-natural and what is against nature both share the characteristic of being not-natural; what is above reason and what is against reason are both not-reasonable; what surpasses beauty and what is ugly both are not-beautiful.

[48] Breton 1981: 316 raises in fact this point: 'La différence entre image et symbole est ainsi assez aisée à discerner: le symbole 'propose sa signification à travers une inversion'; il 'substitue à l'analogie la correspondance des oppositions'. Je prévois ici une objection, …. On sait, suivant la vieille doctrine classique, que les opposés de contrariété sont du même genre. Je veux 'bien que le contraire ne saurait être une imitation de son contraire'. Il n'en reste pas moins que les opposés sont du même genre. Ne rétablissons-nous pas, finalement, la ressemblance que le symbole devait exclure?' Unfortunately, Breton tries subsequently to save the traditional distinction between symbols and icons. He concludes that we should not press too hard the term 'opposite'. He prefers to take the term to mean that two things stand so far apart that no shared quality could ever put them together and make them resemble each other.

[49] *In RP.* I 73, 11-16: οὐ γὰρ ἐοικότα φανεῖται τὰ σύμβολα ταῦτα ταῖς ὑπάρξεσι τῶν θεῶν. δεῖ δὲ ἄρα τοὺς μύθους, εἴπερ μὴ παντάπασιν ἀποπεπτωκότες ἔσονται τῆς ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν ἀληθείας, ἀπεικάζεσθαί πως τοῖς πράγμασιν, ὧν ἀποκρύπτειν τοῖς φαινομένοις παραπετάσμασιν τὴν θεωρίαν ἐπιχειροῦσιν.

[50] *In RP.* I 77, 24-28.

Theol. Plat. VI 4 p. 24, 7-20, in which Proclus discusses the relation between the leader-gods and the members of their series, summarizes most of the points made above against distinguishing *symbola* and *eikones* on the basis of likeness versus unlikeness. All products bear the same σύνθημα of their leader-god. As we have seen in chapter IV, σύνθημα is another word for a theurgical *symbolon*. However, Proclus continues, in some cases this σύνθημα is clearer and in others more obscure, because the first products of a leader-god have a higher degree of likeness (ὁμοιότης) towards him than later products. '*Eikones* and *paradeigmata* own their existence to likeness which brings them together.'[51] Note that Proclus here treats *eikon* as a synonym of a theurgical *symbolon*, a σύνθημα. This likeness creates an unbreakable bond of *philia* which holds the cosmos together. Likeness binds even opposites (καὶ τὰ ἐναντία συνδεῖ) together. This shows that two opposite things may still share a certain likeness.

I conclude then that the distinction between symbols and *eikones* cannot be one of likeness versus unlikeness. In the next section I shall try to provide an alternative description of an *eikon*. In order to do so, I shall now first study the nature of science and scientific poetry as recollection.

3.3 *Scientific poetry reconsidered*

3.3.1 *Science as recollection*

Proclus ends his description of scientific poetry with an intriguing remark. Scientific poetry, with all its advice and admonitions,

> **T. 6.4** induces recollection of the revolutions of the soul and of the eternal *logoi* contained in them and of their diverse powers.[52]

The revolutions of the soul are those of the Same and the Other mentioned in the *Timaeus*. At the time that the individual soul entered a body, these revolutions were disturbed (*Ti.* 43c7 ff.). The revolution of the Same is even completely put out of action. It severely damages the cognitive powers of the soul, especially where intelligible knowledge is concerned.[53] But what have recollection and

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[51] Εἰκόνες οὖν καὶ παραδείγματα διὰ τὴν συναγωγὸν ὁμοιότητα τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔλαχον.

[52] *In RP.* I 179, 13-5: ἀνάμνησίν τε παρεχόμενα τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς περιόδων καὶ τῶν ἀϊδίων ἐν αὐταῖς λόγων καὶ τῶν ποικίλων δυνάμεων.

[53] For the soul's capacity of intelligible knowledge, see Brisson 1994: 417.

the eternal *logoi* to do with it and why are they connected with scientific poetry?

Carlos Steel has examined Proclus' theory of recollection in an instructive article[54] which I shall briefly summarize here. Proclus subscribes to Plato's view, expressed in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*, that the soul contains some sort of innate knowledge. This knowledge takes the form of λόγοι. These are not just cognitive principles in the soul, but also constitute the essence of the soul itself. Hence they are called οὐσιώδεις λόγοι, 'essential reasons'. These *logoi* are emanations on the level of soul of the Forms (εἴδη) contained in Nous. They are therefore inferior to the latter. Since the soul always possesses these *logoi* it is always engaged in some sort of intellectual activity, without, however, being aware of it. Proclus compares it to such physical activities as breathing and the blood beating in our veins. These things also happen without any special effort or decision. We possess this knowledge in an unarticulated way. What we should do is to arouse these internal *logoi* through recollection (ἀνάμνησις) induced by looking at the φαινόμενα: we study the sensible world, try to derive a posteriori universal notions from it, and in this way manage to articulate, i.e. to remember, our internal a priori notions. This process of articulating our innate *logoi* is described by means of an Iamblichean term: projection (προβάλλειν τοὺς λόγους). These articulated notions constitute the sciences. Science (ἐπιστήμη) is thus not based on abstractions from the sensible world, as Aristotle would have it. It is based on the eternal Forms as far as these are present in our soul as *logoi*. Abstractions only serve as a means to call forth our innate notions.

Since our souls *are* these *logoi*, remembering them is remembering ourselves. Steel refers to a beautiful passage in which the soul engaged in doing science is compared to someone looking at his own reflection in a mirror. Such a person may marvel at his own appearance and wish to look upon himself directly. In the same way, a soul engaged in doing science studies the notions it itself projects. It realises that these projected notions are but images of the *logoi* of which it consists. Next it will turn to its own beautiful *logoi* and adore its own beauty.[55] Proclus refers to this process as the awakening of the soul and the purification of its eye. The soul that turns towards her

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[54] Steel 1997.

[55] *In Euclid.* 141, 2-19, cf. Sheppard 1995: 348 on this passage.

own *logoi*, moves away from the realm of matter and towards the intelligible.[56]

We can now understand what **T. 6.4** means. Science makes the soul remember itself. It induces memory of its cognitive powers, especially where intelligible knowledge is concerned. These are the revolutions that make up the immortal part of the soul that consists of the innate *logoi*. These *logoi* originate from the eternal Forms.

3.3.2 *Mathematics as recollection through* eikones

All science is recollection. Proclus attributes to the Pythagoreans the discovery of this principle. What is more, they also realised that, although evidence of such memories can be cited from many areas, it is especially from mathematics that they come. This is why the study (μάθησις) that especially brings us the recollection of the eternal *logoi* in the soul is called μαθηματική.[57] In this paragraph, I shall argue that *eikones* belong primarily to mathematics, understood by Proclus as this Pythagorean science of recollection.[58]

The mathematician in the process of recollection studies mathematical objects which Proclus calls *eikones*. Right in the first pages of his commentary on Euclid's *Elements*, Proclus discusses their ontological status. He assigns an intermediate position to them between the Forms and material things

> **T. 6.5** Mathematical objects, and in general all objects of discursive thought, have an intermediate position. They go beyond the objects of Nous in being divisible, but they surpass sensible things in being devoid of matter. They are inferior to the former in simplicity yet superior to the latter in precision, reflecting reality more clearly than do perceptible things. Nevertheless they are only *eikones*, imitating in their divided fashion the indivisible and in their multiform fashion the uniform *paradeigmata* of true reality.[59]

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[56] For mathematics purifying the eye of the soul, see e.g. *In Euclid.* 20, 14ff. with a reference to Plato *R.* 527e and *In Euclid.* 46, 15-47, 8 in which mathematics is extolled as 'arousing our innate knowledge, awakening our thinking, purging our understanding, bringing to light the concepts that belong essentially to us, taking away the forgetfulness and ignorance that we have from birth.'

[57] *In Euclid.* 44, 25-47, 8.

[58] It is true that both Trimpi 1983: 200-210 and Sheppard 1995 point to the use of *eikones* in connection with mathematics. However, both adhere to a distinction between *eikones* and *symbola* in terms of likeness versus unlikeness and do not seem to notice the central role *eikones* play in the process of scientific recollection.

[59] *In Euclid.* 4, 18-5, 2 (tr. Morrow 1970: 4 adapted): τὰ δὲ μαθηματικὰ καὶ ὅλως τὰ διανοητὰ μέσην κεκλήρωται τάξιν, τῶν μὲν τῇ διαιρέσει πλεονάζοντα, τῶν δὲ τῇ ἀϋλίᾳ προέχοντα, καὶ τῶν μὲν τῇ ἁπλότητι λειπόμενα, τῶν δὲ τῇ ἀκριβείᾳ προυπάρχοντα καὶ τρανεστέρας μὲν ἐμφάσεις ἔχοντα τῶν αἰσθητῶν τῆς νοητῆς

Note the fact that this text corroborates our observation that *eikones* are not simply like their *paradeigmata*, but also unlike. They are divided and multiform, whereas the Forms are indivisible and uniform.

The context of **T. 6.5** reveals the Platonic pedigree of the term *eikon*. Proclus gives his definition of mathematical objects as images of the intelligible realm in a paraphrase of Plato's famous image of the Line in *R.* 509dff. Like Plato, Proclus assigns an ontologically intermediary position to mathematical objects between the perceptible things and the Forms. However, he goes beyond Plato's text in describing the relation between mathematical objects and Forms as one of image and original comparable to the relation of shadows and reflections to the concrete things that cause them (509e1 εἰκόνες), and that of the concrete things (510b4 ὡς εἰκόσιν) to their corresponding mathematical objects. This is understandable, given the fact that the mathematical objects are supposed to stand to the Forms as the shadows and reflections stands to the concrete objects.[60] All the same, Plato does not explicitly say so, but presents the difference between the sections of the mathematical objects and the Forms as being one of method (i.e. doing mathematics versus doing dialectics).[61] Personally, I doubt whether Plato wants us to consider the mathematical objects as images of the Forms. It seems to me that the very method of dialectics is opposed to the use of images, for it is described as a method which has nothing to do with images (ἄνευ τῶν περὶ ἐκεῖνο εἰκόνων) since it occupies itself with the Forms only. If even modern scholars are drawn to conclude that the mathematical objects are images of the Forms, Proclus was all the more tempted to do so given his theory of innate ideas. As we have seen, the innate *logoi* are themselves emanations of the Forms. Science studies the projections of these emanations, which are therefore images of the Forms. This also holds true for mathematical objects. Thus, the image of a triangle projected in the *phantasia*[62] is only gradually different from a drawn triangle. They may both be considered as images of a Form Triangle. When a mathematician examines the

οὐσίας, εἰκόνες δὲ ὅμως ὄντα καὶ μεριστῶς μὲν τὰ ἀμέριστα, πολυειδῶς δὲ μονοειδῆ παραδείγματα τῶν ὄντων ἀπομιμούμενα …

60 See e.g. O'Meara 1989: 168 who follows Proclus' lead here: '(This text by Proclus) also treats geometry as performing the role assigned to mathematics in general in Plato's *Republic*: to mediate through images between material reality and the Forms.' O'Meara has the image of the Line in mind here, see *o.c.* p. 169.

61 As observes e.g. Annas 1981: 248.

62 On the role of *phantasia* in Proclus' psychology, see Sheppard 1995.

nature of a triangle, he does so by articulating, i.e. projecting, his innate notion of a triangle with the aid of material triangles:

> **T. 6.6** Although we are stirred to activity by sense objects, we project the *logoi* within us, which are *eikones* of other things; and by their means we understand sensible things according to their paradigms and noeric and divine things according to their *eikones*. As these *logoi* in us unfold, they reveal the forms of the gods and the uniform boundaries of the universe by which the gods, in an ineffable manner, bring back all things and enclose them.[63]

From this text it appears that the innate *logoi* hold the same middle position between paradigms and images as the material geometrical objects in Plato's simile of the line. The latter are paradigms in relation to the shadows and reflections of themselves, but images in relation to the immaterial, real, geometrical objects. The sequence of the text proves that these projected, unfolded innate *logoi* are indeed the *eikones* which the Pythagoreans use to hint at divine reality. These *eikones* are said to reveal the forms of the gods. The idea that innate mathematical notions may reveal the gods is the result of Pythagoreanizing tendencies in the Neoplatonic movement, especially fostered by Iamblichus. In this approach the gods may be understood as the paradeigmatic divine Numbers and Figures.[64]

The idea that it is a typical Pythagorean thing to teach about the divine, or rather to activate our recollection of it, through *eikones* often recurs is Proclus. Let me give a few examples. In the *prooemium* to the *Theologia Platonica*, Proclus discusses the four modes of teaching theology: the symbolic method, the one that uses *eikones*, oracles and scientific discourse. About the iconic mode Proclus writes:

> **T. 6.7** The mode of exposition which speaks about the gods by means of *eikones* is Pythagorean, because mathematics were invented by the Pythagoreans in order to stimulate the recollection of the divine principles, and they attempted to reach these by going through mathematics as *eikones*.[65]

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[63] *In Euclid.* 140, 15-22: καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀνακινούμεθα μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθητῶν, προβάλλομεν δὲ τοὺς ἔνδον λόγους, εἰκόνας ἄλλων ὄντας, καὶ διὰ τούτων τὰ μὲν αἰσθητὰ παραδειγματικῶς, τὰ δὲ νοερὰ καὶ θεῖα γινώσκομεν εἰκονικῶς. ἀναπλούμενοι γὰρ οἱ ἐν ἡμῖν λόγοι τὰς μορφὰς τῶν θεῶν ἐπιδεικνύουσι καὶ τὰ ἑνοειδῆ τῶν ὅλων πέρατα, δι' ὧν ἀρρήτως εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἐπιστρέφουσι πάντα καὶ συνέχουσιν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.

[64] On the Pythagorizing tendencies in Neoplatonism, see O'Meara 1989. He points out that Iamblichus places a special emphasis on divine Numbers as gods (pp. 79-81), whereas Proclus turns especially to mathematical figures as gods, due to a difference in psychology (pp. 166-169).

[65] *Theol. Plat.* I 4 p. 20, 8-10: Ὁ δὲ διὰ τῶν εἰκόνων Πυθαγόρειος, ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῖς Πυθαγορείοις τὰ μαθήματα πρὸς τὴν τῶν θείων ἀνάμνησιν ἐξηύρητο καὶ διὰ τούτων

This neatly summarizes everything that has been said in this paragraph: mathematics as recollection is a Pythagorean invention; its objects function as *eikones* of the divine world. The four modes are repeated in *In Parm.* I 646, 21ff. About the iconic mode it is said that some 'aim at presenting divine matters through images (δι' εἰκόνων), using mathematical terms, those used either in arithmetic or in geometry.' *In Tim.* I 129, 31 ff., finally, states that Timaeus' discourse on the nature of the universe is in accordance with the philosophy of the Pythagoreans (οἰκείως τῇ τῶν Πυθαγορείων φιλοσοφίᾳ), for he explains Nature by means of numbers and geometrical figures as if by images (ἀπὸ τῶν ἀριθμῶν καὶ τῶν σχημάτων ὡς δι' εἰκόνων τὴν φύσιν ἀφερμηνεύων).

3.3.3 *The extended use of* eikones

Eikones are primarily projected mathematical innate *logoi*. In a more general sense, though, they appear to be any projection of innate *logoi*, even when the mathematical aspect is absent. This may be demonstrated by means of Proclus' interpretations of passages in Plato that evidently have little to do with numbers and mathematical figures, but which are nonetheless conceived as *eikones* in the sense of projections of innate *logoi*. Let me start this demonstration with a passage from the *Sixth essay* in which Proclus compares the myths of Homer and other poets to those constructed by Plato. The latter abstained from ascribing immoral behaviour to the gods. Instead, he taught about the gods by means of certain images (*In RP.* I 73, 17: διὰ τῶν εἰκόνων): he projected (προβέβληται cf. § 3.3.1) likenesses, statues as it were, which are images (ἀπεικασμένα) of those hidden conceptions about the gods.[66] Thus, Plato's myths are projected *eikones* of a higher reality and as such analogous to mathematical objects as projections. The fact that Proclus compares these projections to statues is interesting. In *In Crat.* § 16 p. 6, 12f. he compares the mathematical *eikones* and discursive essential *logoi* to statues as well.[67]

Elsewhere Proclus appears to connect Plato's iconic, non-mathematical discourse to the Pythagorean *eikones*. In his commentary on

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ὡς εἰκόνων ἐπ' ἐκεῖνα διαβαίνειν ἐπεχείρουν·

[66] *In RP.* I 73, 20-22: ἀλλ' αὐτὰ τὰ περὶ θεῶν νοήματα ἄχραντα ἀποκέκρυπται, προβέβληται δὲ αὐτῶν οἷον ἀγάλματα ἐμφανῆ τοῖς ἔνδον ἀπεικασμένα ὁμοιώματα τῆς ἀπορρήτου θεωρίας.

[67] εἰκόνας καὶ λόγους οὐσιώδεις διεξοδικούς, οἷον ἀγάλματα τῶν ὄντων.

the *Timaeus* he explains why a short summary of the *Republic* precedes the myth of Atlantis.[68] Both are enquiries into nature, but the summary of the *Republic* functions as an *eikon*, whereas the Atlantis-myth serves as a *symbolon*. Plato, according to Proclus, borrowed this procedure from the Pythagoreans, who gave their instructions first through similitudes, then through *eikones*, and finally through *symbola*. As we have seen, Pythagorean *eikones* are ordinarily understood to be numbers and mathematical figures. The fact that Proclus interprets the summary of the *Republic* as a Pythagorean *eikon* is therefore a clear indication that we may consider the Platonic *eikones* as derived from of the Pythagorean mathematical ones.

Another passage that shows that the Platonic *eikones* are a special form of the scientific ones is provided by Proclus' interpretation of the organisation of the *Parmenides* in the fashion of a Chinese box:[69] Pythodorus, a friend of Zeno's, had told Antiphon about the conversation between Socrates, Zeno and Parmenides. Antiphon, in his turn, informed Cephalus, who is himself the narrator in the *Parmenides*. So we have four versions of that conversation: (1) the original conversation, (2) Pythodorus' version of it, (3) Antiphon's version, and (4) Cephalus' version. Proclus interprets this complicated narrative structure in an iconic way.[70] He believes that it reflects the content of the dialogue, which is about the theory of Forms.[71] The passing of the *logoi*, the words that make up the conversation, is compared to the emanation of the Forms, which pass from Nous to the different levels of Soul. In this interpretation, conversation (1) is analogous to the divine Nous. At this rank 'there is no imaging (οὐδὲν εἰκονικόν) of anything higher, just as in the original conversation the argument (*logoi*) was not transmitted through *phantasia* or memory (memory is an *eikon* of the things remembered).'[72] The *logoi* of the second conversation represent the Forms on the level of Soul.

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[68] *In Tim.* I 30, 2ff.

[69] *In Parm.* I 625, 37-630, 14.

[70] For the fact that Proclus interprets the dialogue as an *eikon*, see e.g. *In Parm.* I 626, 23 the *logoi* told to Antiphon correspond to (εἰκότως ἀπεικάζοιντο) the *logoi* in the human soul; *o.c.* 628, 13f.: we may liken (ἐνεικονίζεσθαι) Zeno to Life; *o.c.* 628, 25: the first conversation, i.e. that of Parmenides, Zeno and Socrates bears the likeness of genuine beings (εἰκόνα φέρειν τῶν ὄντως ὄντων).

[71] *In Parm.* I 625, 37ff.: 'for we must speak now of the analogies to reality which this series (sc. of the four conversations) presents, taking our point of departure from the inquiry about Ideas, which is so prominent in the dialogue that some persons have entitled it *On Ideas* (tr. Morrow/Dillon).

[72] *In Parm.* I 627, 8-12.

These Forms are secondary to the Forms on the level of Nous and are thus *eikones* of the latter (τῶν νοητῶν εἰκόνες), 'even as the second exposition is secondary because it uses memory and *phantasia*.'[73] Proclus refers here to the *eikones* we are discussing in this chapter, for they are in soul as reflections of the Form produced by memory and *phantasia*. Next come the forms in nature that are *eikones* of *eikones*, and finally the forms in sensible objects.[74] So what we have here then is an *eikon*, the dramatic setting of the *Parmenides*, about Forms and their *eikones*.

3.3.4 *Homer and Theognis as iconic poets*

Now it is time to see how the examples of scientific poetry mentioned by Proclus fit into our interpretation. Let us first turn to the Homeric passages which he considers to belong to the category of scientific poetry. Proclus *In RP*. I 193, 4-9 refers to passages in which Homer reveals the various substances of the different parts of the soul, the difference between the *eidolon* and the soul that makes use of it, and finally the order of the elements in the cosmos. In the case of the difference between the *eidolon* of the soul and the soul itself, Proclus has passages from the *Nekyia* in *Od.* 11 in mind, as appears from *In RP*. I 172, 9-30. For the other two cases, it is not clear which passages Proclus is thinking of.[75] The fact is, however, that Homer nowhere actually treats these subjects. Hence it is only logical to suppose that the Homeric texts are conceived as *eikones*, comparable to the *eikones* used in the extended way described in § 3.3.3 above. The discussion in *In RP*. I 172, 9-30 seems to justify that assumption. The *eidolon* of Heracles in Hades, and the real Heracles among the Olympian gods is supposed to show that the real self is situated in the soul, whereas the *eidolon* represents the corporeal nature which resembles the real self but is not identical to it.

Theognis constitutes a different case. One can imagine that Theognis is supposed to convey *episteme* about ethical notions to his audience, and that therefore his poetry belongs to the category of scientific poetry. But what about its iconic character? Theognis' account of what one should do and from what one should refrain is

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73 *In Parm.* I 627, 12-15.

74 *In Parm.* I 627, 17-22.

75 In the case of the substances of the soul, Festugière trans. *In RP.* vol. 1 1970: 210 suggests a reference to the discussion in *In RP*. I 155, 1ff. where Proclus cites *Od.* 20, 17. That discussion, however, deals with the superiority of the harmony of the soul in comparison to that of the body.

rather straightforward. There is scarcely any need to twist the material a bit as was the case for Homer. Before producing a possible solution as to how Theognis can still be an example of iconic poetry, two qualifying remarks need to be made. First, it is important to realize that Proclus nowhere says that scientific poetry necessarily has to use images. I hope to have explained above that there is a close connection between the knowledge on the level of *episteme* and *eikones*. However, it does not follow that *episteme* has always to be presented in the form of images. Second, it is not clear whether Proclus had ever read Theognis at all.[76] The example stems, as Proclus *In RP.* I 186, 29ff. acknowledges, from Plato's *Laws*. He discusses Theognis as part of his overall project to classify the various references to poetry in Plato in accordance with his own tripartite division of poetry. He has to bring it under some heading, and that of scientific poetry seems to be the most appropriate one given its subject-matter.

All the same, we are perhaps allowed to consider his poetry as iconic after all. The advice and admonitions of poets like Theognis are in some way supposed to induce recollection of the innate *logoi* (see **T. 6.4**). This may perhaps be a reason for Proclus to consider them as *eikones* of morality in general: just as *eikones* of circles are projections of the innate Form Circle in the *phantasia*, in the same way all kinds of moral admonitions are projections of the innate notion of morality. The study of these projections refers the reader of Theognis back to that notion, just as the study of projected circles will ultimately refer the student of mathematics back to the innate Form of the circle.

3.3.5 *Conclusions: distinguishing* eikones *from* symbola

We are now in a position to distinguish *eikones* from *symbola*. To start with, *eikones* and symbols come from different sources. Symbols belong to the first class of poetry. This poetry is a form of *mania*, of inspiration by the gods. Thus it is a product of the gods, not of the human poet. This helps to explain why symbolic poetry seems to coincide with myths:[77] most of the myths are found in the divinely inspired poets, notably Homer, Hesiod and Orpheus. Scientific poetry on the other hand takes its origin in the human soul. It consists in articulating innate knowledge by means of *eikones*.

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[76] As Anne Sheppard has pointed out to me.
[77] As observes Dillon 1976: 249.

Furthermore, symbols and *eikones* work differently on the human soul. The study of *eikones* helps us to turn inward to our true selves. It awakens our soul and purifies its eye. That is to say, it turns our attention from the sensible world to the intelligible. It thus puts the soul on the track of the Forms themselves and moves the souls towards Nous.[78] The effect of symbolic poetry is even more intensive: it unifies us to the gods themselves. Science may therefore be regarded as a preparation for divine *mania*, and this is exactly how *eikones* and *symbola* are related. As we saw above (§ 3.3.3) Proclus interprets the summary of the *Republic* in the *Timaeus* as an *eikon* which is followed by the myth of Atlantis, a *symbolon*. He explains that this reflects a Pythagorean practice. The Pythagoreans proceed gradually in their instructions. First they explain things by means of likenesses (διὰ τῶν ὁμοίων), next by means of images (τῶν εἰκόνων) and finally through symbols (διὰ τῶν συμβόλων).[79]

It will be remembered that Sheppard considered scientific poetry as 'somewhat of an oddity' besides mimetic and poetic poetry, for it did not represent anything, 'but simply tells the reader or the audience of its subject-matter.'[80] In my analysis of the concept of iconic poetry this does not hold true, or at least not completely. It is not a matter of simply telling things, but of awaking the recollection of innate principles. This can be done by means of *eikones*. These *are* representations of a higher reality. As the case of Theognis shows, however, it is difficult to say whether scientific poetry *always* involves the use of images. All the same, the representations by mimetic, scientific and symbolic poetry constitute an ascending scale. Mimetic poetry represents the material world as a product of Forms and thus furthest from metaphysical reality, symbolic poetry represents the world of Forms itself, whereas scientific poetry represents the in-between world of innate Forms.

In my rejection of the traditional interpretation of *eikones* and *symbola*, I did not conceal the fact that they are sometimes used as if

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78 *In Euclid.* 47, 2f.: κινεῖ δὲ τὰς ψυχὰς ἐπὶ νοῦν, καὶ ὥσπερ ἐκ κάρου βαθέος ἀνεγείρει.

79 *In Tim.* I 30, 4-15. In reports on Pythagoreanism, *symbola* appear to be equivalents for the famous *akousmata* (Burkert 1972: 196). Interestingly enough, Aristotle recognizes a twofold *pragmateia* among the Pythagoreans: on the one hand the Pythagorean myths and the *acusmata*, on the other a philosophy of number connected with mathematics, astronomy, and music (Burkert 1972: 197). The latter seem to me to corrrespond to teaching by means of *eikones*, whereas the former to teaching by means of *symbola*.

80 Sheppard 1980: 182.

they were synonyms. Does this observation turn itself against this new interpretation? I believe not. A *symbolon* is a product of a certain divine principle and thus has some likeness to it.[81] As a product it is ontologically speaking secondary to its cause. In the same way an *eikon* has a certain likeness in regard to its model and is secondary to it. More specifically an *eikon* in a scientific context is the projection of an innate Form, i.e. of a divine principle in so far as it is present in us. Scientific *eikones* then are highly comparable to inspired *symbols*. For that reason Proclus chooses approximate synonyms terms to refer to them. The distinction between the two is triggered by contexts which contrasts modes of revealing knowledge. Outside these contexts they may be used more or less as synonyms.

3.3.6 *Scientific poetry and the* Hymn to Helios

To my mind Proclus' hymns are theurgical in nature and about the elevation of the soul towards the divine, and thus not so much about articulating our innate notions. This is not to say that scientific poetry and *eikones* are completely absent from Proclus' poetry. Proclus' *Hymn to Helios* may to some extent be considered as an example of scientific poetry. I do not wish to suggest, however, that this hymn is a textbook example of such poetry. Helios was after all a prime deity in Chaldaean rites concerning theurgical purification and elevation. This aspect will be dealt with at length in the commentary on that hymn. The blend of inspired, theurgical poetry on the one hand and scientific poetry on the other does not need to surprise us. According to Proclus, even Homer happily mingles the three types of poetry.[82]

As for the scientific poetry in the hymn, this aspect is most obvious when Proclus calls Helios an εἰκὼν παγγενέταο θεοῦ (vs. 34). It is a reference to the simile of the sun as an image of the Good in Plato *R.* 506eff. This is not just a matter of intertextuality. As we have seen above, *eikones* are used to stir the recollection of forgotten knowledge. In the context of the hymn, the sun is invoked as the *eikon* of the Father of all and the *anagogeus* to him of the fallen souls (vs. 34) that have forgotten (λάθοιντο) about the 'bright-shining court of the Father' (vss. 29-32).

We may carry this point somewhat further. Just as the sun is an image of the Good in the *Republic*, in the same way the whole material

[81] See chapter II § 3.2 for the fact that a product necessarily always preserves a certain likeness to its cause.

[82] *In RP.* I 192, 6-195, 12.

cosmos is an *eikon* of the intelligible cosmos according to the *Timaeus* (92c7: εἰκὼν τοῦ νοητοῦ θεὸς αἰσθητός). Plato admonishes us to study the divine harmony that pervades this *eikon*. Man in his turn is a copy of the material macrocosmos and by studying it we may restore harmony in ourselves and in that way become like god.[83] The idea that scientific research of the cosmos has a salutary effect on the soul is accepted by Proclus.[84] When we look at the first part of the hymn, we note that harmony is the main topic. Helios is praised for pouring a rich stream of harmony into the cosmos (vs. 4: ἁρμονίης ῥύμα πλούσιον). Proclus then enumerates different sorts of harmony, starting with the cosmic harmony: the movements of the planets, which cause 'fruitful drops', the succession of the seasons, and the elements which are bound together (vss. 8-14). Next in the hymn come other forms of harmony, especially the harmony of the body, i.e. health. This praise of Helios as the source of all harmony seems to me to serve a double aim. On the one hand it is used in the way some myths are used: as a *symbolon* to activate the beneficent gifts of the gods invoked (cf. chapter IV § 3.3). On the other hand this enumeration of forms of harmony in the cosmos may also function as an *eikon*, a reminder, of the notion of harmony and in this way foster the harmony in the soul. It thus prepares the soul of Proclus for the reception of the things he is praying for.

In this context we also note that Helios is asked to scatter the mist (ἀχλύς) which surrounds Proclus (vs. 41). This mist is the body that hampers the eye of the soul. This image is borrowed from Homer.[85] Interestingly enough, Proclus refers to this same passage in his commentary on *Euclid*: 'Plato himself clearly affirms that mathematics purifies and elevates the soul, like Homer's Athena dispersing the mist from the intellectual light of understanding (*In Euclid* 30, 1f.: τὴν ἀχλὺν ἀφαιροῦσαν τοῦ νοεροῦ τῆς διανοίας φωτός). In this case the light of understanding consists of the innate *logoi* of the soul. Steel, in his article on innate knowledge discussed above,[86] refers to the same simile found in *De malorum subsistentia* c. 22. In this text Proclus compares the innate knowledge of the soul to a light shining inside. Even when it is surrounded with a thick smoggy mist

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[83] On this theme, see Hadot 1983.

[84] See e.g. *In Tim.* I 5, 7-6, 6.

[85] For a discussion of the significance of this image, see chapter V § 3.3.3.

[86] Steel 1997: 298, as Steel notes this text is primarily about divine souls, though it may be applied to all souls descending into generation.

(*extraneitatem eius quod circum, grossi et nebulosi entis*) it remains shining inside and is not entirely obscured. It should be added that this hymn is about more than bringing out innate knowledge, for Proclus prays that Helios may imbue him with holy light after he has dispersed this darkness. Proclus is thus also praying for illumination. All the same such a prayer is quite compatible with the idea of purification through science. In chapter III we have proposed the view that the leader-gods, including Helios, connect the human soul to Nous and that the holy light prayed for is the illumination that goes with union with Nous. It is precisely to Nous that science moves us.[87]

4. *Emotions in the hymns*

4.1 *The problem with emotions*

In the discussion of the three types of poetry it appeared that Proclus rejected mimetic poetry because 'it inflates the smallest passions, especially of joy and misery.' For that reason we do not expect to find anything resembling this type of poetry in the hymns. All the same, many passages in the hymns appear to be intended to raise feelings of misery. The horrible sufferings of the soul are painted in the most vivid and touching details throughout the hymns: the soul trapped in matter is beleaguered by daemons (*H.* I 28-31, *H.* IV 12, *H.* VII 41-2), and Proclus' prayer to Helios to protect him against them is full of tears (*H.* I 36: ἱκεσίην πολυδάκρυον), his life is full of hardship (*H.* II 19), he is like Odysseus being tossed back and forth by cold waves (*H.* IV 10-11), a potential victim to flesh-wasting illnesses (*H.* VII 44-46). One cannot help feeling pity for such a tormented man. This seems to be at odds with his dismissal of poetry that arouses such emotions. What then should we make of this?

The first thought one might have is that this is part of Proclus' attempts to win the favour of the gods to whom he is praying. To arouse feelings of pity is a normal procedure in ancient rhetorical practice and is amply attested in ancient hymns and prayers. We may note here that, according to Marinus *Vita Procli* § 8, Proclus enjoyed a thorough rhetorical education in Alexandria. He was groomed for a career at the bar and was a quite promising student until Athena

[87] *In Euclid.* 47, 2: (mathematics) κινεῖ δὲ τὰς ψυχὰς ἐπὶ νοῦν.

called him to the study of philosophy. However, all major philosophers in Antiquity postulated that the gods are free from πάθη. After all, emotions stand between man and perfect happiness and one of the aims of the philosophical exercises of most schools is to free the student of philosophy from them. Since the gods by definition enjoy an existence of permanent bliss, they must be immune to their effects. Proclus too subscribes to this idea. It appears problematic to him that in Homer the gods weep for their favourite mortals, whereas Socrates, as a true philosopher, remained untouched by the tears of his relatives while awaiting execution.[88] Proclus denies that the gods could ever fall victim to such emotions. Therefore it is not to be expected that Proclus believed he could influence the gods by mere rhetorical tricks.

4.2 *Human nothingness*

Iamblichus explicitly denies in *De Mysteriis* that emotional appeals sway the gods. Porphyry objected to Iamblichus that the invocations (αἱ κλήσεις) of the gods made by the theurgists make the gods look like beings who may be emotionally influenced (ἐμπαθεῖς). Iamblichus emphatically rejects this: if the ascent obtained by means of the invocations grants the priests purification from emotions (κάθαρσιν παθῶν) and deliverance from becoming and unification to the divine principle, how could anyone ever ascribe emotions to that principle (τί δήποτε πάθη τις αὐτῇ προσάπτει)?[89]

Iamblichus' reply to a subsequent objection by Porphyry throws interesting light on Proclus' moving descriptions of his hopeless condition. Porphyry wonders whether it is right that we, impure as we are, bother the pure divinity with prayers (αἱ λιτανεῖαι). Iamblichus replies that it is precisely our awareness of our nothingness (ἡ συναίσθησις τῆς περὶ ἑαυτοὺς οὐδενείας) when we compare ourselves to the gods that makes us turn automatically towards prayers. From these supplications (ἱκετείας) we are soon elevated to the god who is the object of our supplications (πρὸς τὸ ἱκετευόμενον ἀναγόμεθα). In this way we acquire likeness to him and progress from imperfection towards perfection.[90] Iamblichus stresses the nothingness of man against Plotinus and Porphyry's optimistic belief that our souls

88 *In RP.* I 122, 25-123, 28.
89 Iamblichus *Myst.* I 12 (40, 16-42, 17).
90 Iamblichus *Myst.* I 15 (47, 16-48, 4).

belong ultimately to the realm of Nous. It is exactly the fact that we are impure and imperfect that makes us pray to the pure and the perfect.

Later on in *De Mysteriis,* Iamblichus returns to the topic of the nothingness of the human soul. In *Myst.* III 18, Iamblichus answers Porphyry's question whether it is a god who is present at theurgical sessions, or just an angel or a demon. Iamblichus replies that it is impossible to perform divine works (ἰσόθεα ἔργα) without the assistance of the gods.

> **T. 6.8** For the human race is weak and but small; it cannot look far, and its nothingness is innate. There is only one cure within its reach from its inherent wandering and disorder and its unending change: when it partakes somehow, to the degree possible, in the divine light.[91]

It is because of this human weakness that Iamblichus vehemently rejects Porphyry's suggestion that the powerful gods perform these works because they are forced to do so by human invocations (*Myst.* III 18 (145, 6-7): δι' ἡμῶν ἑλκόμενος ἀνάγκαις ταῖς τῆς κλήσεως ταῦτα ἐπιτελεῖ).

I would suggest, therefore, that the horrific descriptions of the fallen soul in Proclus' hymns originate from these sentiments of nothingness. They are not intended to stir the πάθη of the divinities invoked but are the expression of genuinely felt feelings of anxiety on the side of the praying Platonist. If one is to obtain participation in the divine light, the recurrent theme of Proclus' hymns, one has to fully realize the position one is in. People like Plotinus and Porphyry, with their belief in an undescended soul, do not really know themselves. Their optimism is their doom. The Platonist who faces his situation is overcome by fears and worries. However, once he recognizes his position and turns to theurgical prayer, he can become like the gods. He thus reaches the safe harbour of the transcendent world away from the material realm. In this way he is freed from πάθη, since these are connected to the material world.

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91 *Myst.* III 18 (144, 12-17): Τὸ γὰρ ἀνθρώπειον φῦλον ἀσθενές ἐστι καὶ σμικρόν, βλέπει τε ἐπὶ βραχύ, σύμφυτόν τε οὐδένειαν κέκτηται· μία δ' ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτῷ τῆς ἐνυπαρχούσης πλάνης καὶ ταραχῆς καὶ τῆς ἀστάτου μεταβολῆς ἰατρεία, εἴ τινα μετουσίαν θείου φωτὸς κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν μεταλάβοι·

Appendix
Proclus' tripartite division of poetry and Syrianus

Anne Sheppard (1980: 95-103) has argued that Proclus' division of poetry into three types as presented in the sixth essay of the *In RP.* was an invention of his own, not withstanding the fact that Proclus *In RP.* I 71, 2ff. disclaims originality for the views he is to expound. Sheppard argues that we should not attach too much value to this statement. Proclus probably owed indeed much of the allegorical interpretations of Homer he offers in this essay to Syrianus. Since he seizes almost every occasion to stress his debt to his master, this could easily be a somewhat exaggerated disclaimer. Sheppard's main argument is the fact that Proclus interprets Plato *Phdr.* 245a differently in the earlier fifth essay. In the fifth essay, Proclus offers a bipartite distinction of poetry between inspired and uninspired poetry as opposed to the tripartite division in the sixth. This bipartite division corresponds to Hermeias' interpretation of the same passage in his account of Syrianus' course on that dialogue.

I agree with Sheppard that we do not have any passage of Syrianus which puts all the bits of the theory of the three types of poetry together in quite the way Proclus does in the sixth essay. All the same, Syrianus' interpretation of the three speeches in Plato's *Phaedrus* as reported by Hermeias may have helped Proclus to develop his own classification of poetry. This is what he has to say about these three speeches:

> **T. 6.8** And to put it briefly, the course of thought in that book could be divided in three parts into three types of life: the licentious life, which is shown in Lysias' speech, the prudent life, which is shown in the first speech by Socrates, and thirdly the inspired life, which can be seen in Socrates' second and final speech.[92]

Note first that Syrianus divides the three speeches in accordance with three types of life. It will be remembered that Proclus arrived at his tripartite division of poetry by matching poetry to the three types of life of the soul. In both cases the highest type of life to which the best poetry and the best speech correspond involves the inspired sort.[93] The second best type of life is according to Syrianus the prudent life. He characterizes it as 'the beauty of virtues and branches of knowledge.'[94] As we have seen, Proclus put enthusiastic poetry above scientific poetry, stating, that inspired madness is superior to σωφροσύνη. Proclus' scientific poetry was precisely about knowledge (*episteme*) and good and fine deeds. The latter square with

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92 *In Phdr.* p. 12, 5-10 ed. Couvreur: Καὶ συνελόντι εἰπεῖν εἰς τρία τέμοις ἄν τὴν πᾶσαν τοῦ λόγου διάνοιαν καὶ εἰς τρεῖς ζωάς· εἴς τε τὴν ἀκόλαστον ἥτις ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ Λυσίου ὁρᾶται, καὶ τὴν σώφρονα ἥτις ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ λόγῳ τοῦ Σωκράτους ὁρᾶται, καὶ τρίτην τὴν ἔνθουν ἥτις ἐν τῇ παλινῳδίᾳ καὶ τῷ τελευταίῳ λόγῳ τοῦ Σωκράτους ἐνορᾶται·

93 Cf. *In RP.* I 178, 28: τὴν ἐνθεάζουσαν ψυχήν.

94 *In Phdr.* p. 12, 4-5: τὸ ψυχικὸν κάλλος καὶ τὸ τῶν ἀρετῶν καὶ ἐπιστημῶν.

Syrianus' virtues. Third comes the licentious life. This may correspond to Proclus' type of life that fills itself with fantasies and irrational sense-perceptions and may go with a kind of poetry that inflates the passions. If this suggestion holds water, Proclus' disclaimer seems a bit more justified.

Part Two

COMMENTARY

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I. (ΕΙΣ ΗΛΙΟΝ)

Introduction

Homer already recognizes in the sun a god, Helios. Traces of solar cult are rare for this early period in contrast to later times. All the same, the archaic Greeks must already have been fully aware of the vital importance of Helios.[1] Julian, that devoted reader of Homer and fervent adept of King Helios, makes the following lucid observation in this respect. When Helios threatens Zeus in *Od.* 12, 377 ff. that from now on he will shine for the dead instead of the living if Zeus and the other Olympians do not punish the crew of Odysseus for the theft of his cattle, Zeus gives in straight away. This time he does not boast that he is stronger than all other gods together, as he did in his confrontation with the other Olympian gods (*Il.* 8, 17ff.). On the contrary, he begs Helios to continue to shine for the gods and for the living and promises to punish the thieves (Julian *Or.* XI [IV] *On King Helios* c. 11, 136d ff.).

Helios in his classical appearance is the god who gives warmth and light to the world and thus makes life possible. He drives his solar chariot daily along the vault of heaven and during his course sees and hears everything. He is especially a witness of injustice and often avenges it.[2] He is thus associated with harmony and order in both the motions of the heavenly bodies and society. In this respect he resembles Apollo with whom he is often identified. In the course of time, Helios becomes more and more the absolute master of the universe. For this reason he is sometimes identified with Zeus. He even holds power over the Moirai. Because of this dominant position, his help is sought by magicians — as magic papyri testify — and all kinds of mystery cults that aim at the salvation of the initiated, like that of Mithras.[3] Hymns bear testimony to the worship of Helios, like

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1 On the rarity of solar cult in the early period, see Fauth 1995: xvii ff., who denies that this reflects an inferior position of Helios in regard to other gods, as e.g. M. P. Nilsson has argued.

2 For Helios' qualities in classical times, see e.g. Fauth 1995: xix ff. and R. Gordon, *DDD* 750-763.

3 For Helios' appearance in magical papyri, see Fauth 1995: 1-120.

the *Homeric Hymn to Helios, Orphic Hymn* 8, and the hymn to Herakles-Astrochiton-Helios by Proclus' contemporary Nonnus *D.* 40, 369-410.[4] Proclus takes much of his inspiration from this traditional representation of Helios, as H. D. Saffrey has shown in a richly documented article.[5] In this respect he is certainly the servant of the Muses loyal to the ancestral traditions that he hopes to be (vss. 43-44).

The Neoplatonists took a special interest in the sun, which found its inspiration both in religious practice and in Platonic texts, especially the comparison of the Good to the sun in Plato's *Republic.* Plotinus for one compares the mystical vision of the Good or the One to the well-established practice of the worship of the rising sun[6] (see *Enn.* V 5 [32] 8, elaborated upon by Proclus *Theol. Plat.* II 11, pp. 64, 11ff.[7]). Porphyry wrote a book now lost on Helios, which probably served as a source of Macrobius' discussions of Helios in his *Saturnalia* I 17-23.[8] The introduction of theurgy by Iamblichus makes solar cult even more important, since in theurgical mysteries the sun plays an important role in the purification and elevation of the soul.[9] The emperor Julian, who proudly announces that he has been an adept of King Helios from an early age onwards,[10] introduces the public cult of Sol Invictus in his heroic attempt to save the world from Christianity. His oration — or his ὕμνος, as he himself called it[11] — composed in honour of King-Helios (*Or.* XI [IV]), testifies to this special theurgical role of Helios. He acknowledges his dependence on Iamblichus' now no longer extant writings (44, 57cd) and thus allows us to glimpse Iamblichus' own treatment of Helios.[12] It is important to keep the different perspectives of Porphyry/Macrobius

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4 On this hymn by Nonnus, see Fauth 1995: 165-183.

5 Saffrey 1984[a].

6 For the worship of the rising sun, see e.g. Hermes' instruction to Tat to worship the sun by bowing to it at its setting and rising (*Corpus Hermeticum* XIII, 16, p. 207, 11-12 ed. Nock- Festugière) and an inscription from the city wall of Oenoanda: 'God is all-seeing Ether; look and pray to him at dawn, looking to this east' (Smith 1995: 98).

7 On this image, see Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* II 1974: 121 n. 12 to p. 64.

8 See Gersh (vol. 2) 1986: 510.

9 See commentary to vs. 34 ψυχῶν ἀναγωγεῦ.

10 Julian *Or.* XI [IV] (*On King Helios*) 1, 130b.

11 See chapter II § 2.2.

12 On Julian's solar theology, see now the fine study by R. Smith 1995 on Julian's gods, esp. pp. 114-178. He stresses the Chaldaean character of Julian's hymn on Helios against those like P. Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism. An Intellectual Biography*, London 1981 who believe that its nature is Mithraic.

and Iamblichus/Julian in mind when one seeks to elucidate Proclus' hymn to Helios. Macrobius' interpretations of traditional myths connected with Helios, like that of Attis and Adonis (cf. vss. 25-6), are rather sober, whereas Julian interprets them in the light of theurgical mysteries.[13] As will be argued in the commentary, Proclus — not very surprisingly — seems to follow Iamblichus' approach. In any case, one should not, as Vogt does in the *apparatus fontium et locorum similium* to his edition, lump them together. Nor is it justified to claim that Macrobius' solar theology is basically that of Iamblichus and Julian without the theurgical element.[14]

Proclus worshipped Helios at dusk, noon and dawn (Marinus *Vita Procli* § 22). His Helios is the deity of the theurgists who protects the soul from punishing daemons, helps it to escape the realm of matter and elevates it to the intelligible realm. Echoes of the Chaldaean Oracles abound in the hymn. His most important discussion of Helios can be found in *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, pp. 56, 1-pp. 65, 3. Helios, identified with Apollo, constitutes the elevating triad of the hypercosmic gods (see chapter III § 2.2, *Figure* 1). As always Proclus seeks to harmonize the Chaldaean tradition with Plato. He does so by connecting two Platonic texts: Plato *R.* 507a1ff. (the comparison of the Good to the sun) and *Tim.* 39b4f. (the light of the sun originates from the Demiurge, not from a material substrate). The text of the *Republic* shows that Plato, in accordance with the Oracles, attributes to the sun a superiority over all other things in the cosmos. The text from the *Timaeus* explains why: Helios receives its light from the Demiurge. The sun becomes thus a mediator between the divine world and ours, the gate through which we may pass to the intelligible realm. For a more elaborate discussion, see commentary to vs. 1 πυρὸς νοεροῦ βασιλεῦ.

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[13] One should also take into account the fundamental difference between Porphyry's and Iamblichus' exegetical approach, see commentary to *H.* III 4 § 2: *The τελεταί as the study of texts.*

[14] See Fauth 1995: 163. One wonders what is left if one takes theurgy out of Iamblichus' solar theology.

Text

Κλῦθι, πυρὸς νοεροῦ βασιλεῦ, χρυσήνιε Τιτάν,
κλῦθι, φάους ταμία, ζωαρκέος, ὦ ἄνα, πηγῆς
αὐτὸς ἔχων κληῖδα καὶ ὑλαίοις ἐνὶ κόσμοις
ὑψόθεν ἁρμονίης ῥύμα πλούσιον ἐξοχετεύων.
κέκλυθι· μεσσατίην γὰρ ἐὼν ὑπὲρ αἰθέρος ἕδρην
καὶ κόσμου κραδιαῖον ἔχων ἐριφεγγέα κύκλον
πάντα τεῆς ἔπλησας ἐγερσινόοιο προνοίης.
ζωσάμενοι δὲ πλάνητες ἀειθαλέας σέο πυρσοὺς
αἰὲν ὑπ' ἀλλήκτοισι καὶ ἀκαμάτοισι χορείαις
ζῳογόνους πέμπουσιν ἐπιχθονίοις ῥαθάμιγγας.
πᾶσα δ' ὑφ' ὑμετέρῃσι παλιννόστοισι διφρείαις
Ὡράων κατὰ θεσμὸν ἀνεβλάστησε γενέθλη.
στοιχείων δ' ὀρυμαγδὸς ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισιν ἰόντων
παύσατο σεῖο φανέντος ἀπ' ἀρρήτου γενετῆρος.
σοὶ δ' ὑπὸ Μοιράων χορὸς εἴκαθεν ἀστυφέλικτος·
ἂψ δὲ μεταστρωφῶσιν ἀναγκαίης λίνον αἴσης,
εὖτε θέλεις· περὶ γὰρ κρατέεις, περὶ δ' ἶφι ἀνάσσεις.
σειρῆς δ' ὑμετέρης βασιλεὺς θεοπειθέος οἴμης
ἐξέθορεν Φοῖβος· κιθάρῃ δ' ὑπὸ θέσκελα μέλπων
εὐνάζει μέγα κῦμα βαρυφλοίσβοιο γενέθλης.
σῆς δ' ἀπὸ μειλιχόδωρος ἀλεξικάκου θιασείης
Παιήων βλάστησεν, ἑὴν δ' ἐπέτασσεν ὑγείην,
πλήσας ἁρμονίης παναπήμονος εὐρέα κόσμον.
σὲ κλυτὸν ὑμνείουσι Διωνύσοιο τοκῆα·
ὕλης δ' αὖ νεάτοις ἐνὶ βένθεσιν εὔιον Ἄττην,
ἄλλοι δ' ἁβρὸν Ἄδωνιν ἐπευφήμησαν ἀοιδαῖς.
δειμαίνουσι δὲ σεῖο θοῆς μάστιγος ἀπειλὴν
δαίμονες ἀνθρώπων δηλήμονες, ἀγριόθυμοι,
ψυχαῖς ἡμετέραις δυεραῖς κακὰ πορσύνοντες,
ὄφρ' αἰεὶ κατὰ λαῖτμα βαρυσμαράγου βιότοιο
σώματος ὀτλεύωσιν ὑπὸ ζυγόδεσμα πεσοῦσαι,
ὑψιτενοῦς δὲ λάθοιντο πατρὸς πολυφεγγέος αὐλῆς.

ἀλλά, θεῶν ριστε, πυριστεφές, ὄλβιε δαῖμον,
εἰκὼν παγγενέταο θεοῦ, ψυχῶν ἀναγωγεῦ,
κέκλυθι καί με κάθηρον ἁμαρτάδος αἰὲν ἁπάσης·
δέχνυσο δ' ἱκεσίην πολυδάκρυον, ἐκ δέ με λυγρῶν

ῥύεο κηλίδων, Ποινῶν δ’ ἀπάνευθε φυλάσσοις
πρηΰνων θοὸν ὄμμα Δίκης, ἣ πάντα δέδορκεν.
αἰεὶ δ’ ὑμετέραισιν ἀλεξικάκοισιν ἀρωγαῖς
ψυχῇ μὲν φάος ἁγνὸν ἐμῇ πολύολβον ὀπάζοις
ἀχλὺν ἀποσκεδάσας ὀλεσίμβροτον, ἰολόχευτον,
σώματι δ’ ἀρτεμίην τε καὶ ἀγλαόδωρον ὑγείην,
εὐκλείης τ’ ἐπίβησον ἐμέ, προγόνων τ’ ἐνὶ θεσμοῖς
Μουσάων ἐρασιπλοκάμων δώροισι μελοίμην.
ὄλβον δ’ ἀστυφέλικτον ἀπ’ εὐσεβίης ἐρατεινῆς,
εἴ κε θέλοις, δός, ἄναξ· δύνασαι δὲ τὰ πάντα τελέσσαι
ῥηιδίως· κρατερὴν γὰρ ἔχεις καὶ ἀπείριτον ἀλκήν.
εἰ δέ τι μοιριδίοισιν, ἑλιξοπόροισιν ἀτράκτοις,
ἀστεροδινήτοις ὑπὸ νήμασιν οὐλοὸν ἄμμιν
ἔρχεται, αὐτὸς ἔρυκε τεῇ μεγάλῃ τόδε ῥιπῇ.

Departure from ed.Vogt: 46 δ’ ἑὰ πάντα

Translation

Hearken, king of noeric fire, Titan holding the golden bridle,
hearken, dispenser of light, you, o lord, who hold yourself
the key to the life-supporting source and channel off from above
a rich stream of harmony into the material worlds.
Hearken: for you, being above the middlemost seat of aether
and in possession of the very brilliant disk, the heart of the cosmos,
have filled everything with your intellect-awakening providence.
The planets, girded with your ever-blooming torches,
through unceasing and untiring dances,
always send life-producing drops down for earthlings.
Under the influence of your chariot’s returning courses
everything that is born has sprouted up according to the ordinance of the Seasons.
The din of the elements clashing with each other
stopped once you appeared from your unspeakable begetter.
For you the unshakeable choir of the Moirai has yielded.
Back again they wind the thread of compelling destiny,
when you wish it. For all around you dominate, all around you rule by force.

From your chain the king of the song that obeys the divine,
Phoibos, sprung forth. Singing inspired songs to the accompaniment of the kithara,
he calms the great wave of deep-roaring becoming.
From your evil-averting band that imparts pleasant gifts
Paiêon sprouted, and he imposed his health
by filling the wide cosmos with harmony wholly devoid of harm.
People honour you in hymns as the famous father of Dionysus.
And again some praise you in songs as Euios Attis in the extreme
depths of matter, whereas others praise you as pretty Adonis.
The threat of your swift whip holds fears for
the wild-tempered daemons, noxious to men,
who prepare evil for our miserable souls,
in order that forever, in the gulf of heavy-resounding life,
they suffer once they have fallen under the yoke of the body
with the result that they forget the bright-shining court of the lofty Father.

But, you the best of gods, crowned with fire, blest daemon,
image of the all-creating god, uplifter of souls,
hearken and always purify me of every fault;
receive my tearful supplication, pull me out of baneful
defilement and keep me far from the punishing deities
while mollifying the swift eye of Justice that sees all.
May you always through your evil-averting help
give holy light rich with blessings to my soul,
once you have scattered the man-destroying poisonous mist,
and to my body fitness and gift-bestowing health;
bring me to glory, that in accord with the traditions of my forefathers
I may cultivate the gifts of the Muses with pretty locks.
Give me, if you wish so, lord, unshakeable bliss
as a reward for lovely piety. You perfect all things
easily, for you have the power and infinite might.
And if some ill comes my way through the threads moved by the stars
from the spindles of destiny that revolve in helices,
ward it off yourself with your mighty radiance.

Structure

The hymn consists of three parts. Part I (vss. 1-5) invokes Helios and asks him to hearken to Proclus' hymn. This invocation opens and closes with κλῦθι/ κέκλυθι.

Part II (vss. 5-32) gives the reason why (vs. 5 γὰρ) Helios should do so: it is his task as the most important deity of the cosmos (vs. 6: he is the heart of it) to fill everything with his providence (vs. 7 πάντα τεῆς ἔπλησας ἐγερσινόοιο προνοίης). The rest of this section is taken up by examples of this providence as exercised either by Helios or by gods that belong to his series. Vss. 9-17 celebrate Helios as the god who causes cosmic harmony. He guarantees the regular movements of the planets and the seasons as well as the order between the elements.[15] Most important in the context of the hymn, however, is the fact that Helios is able to intervene with the Moirai because he steers the planets (see vss. 15-17 with my commentary). The second half of vs. 17 (περὶ γὰρ κρατέεις, περὶ δ' ἶφι ἀνάσσεις) summarizes this celebration of the cosmic power of Helios and in that way closes this section. In the next one (vss. 18-26), Proclus studies Helios in his relation to other gods. Phoibos the god of music and Paiêon the god of health are both gods who too are concerned with harmony. They are presented as belonging to the series of Helios, and therefore as subordinated to him (vss. 18-23). Next (vss. 24-6) come three gods — Dionysus, Attis, and Adonis — who are associated with mystery cults that help the soul to escape from the material realm towards the intelligible world. Helios is the father of Dionysus, and some celebrate him as Attis or Adonis. The final section of the second part (vss. 27-32) takes up this theme by describing the souls trapped in the material realm and in need of divine assistance in order to enable them to flee to the divine world.

Part III (vss. 33-50), introduced by ἀλλά, contains Proclus' own prayers to Helios. Now that Helios' powers have been established in the second part of the hymn, Proclus asks him to employ these powers for his own benefit. Vss. 33-41 are concerned with the salvation of Proclus' soul: in part II (vss. 27-32) Proclus had celebrated Helios as the deity who has the power to drive away the horrible

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[15] Note the resemblance to *In Tim.* I 332, 20ff.: Plato rightly calls the cosmos the most beautiful thing, as may easily be learned from the order of the celestial revolutions, the order of the seasons, the harmony of the elements. The order of that enumeration corresponds to that in the hymn.

daemons that plan to imprison us in the material world when we forget about the divine realm. Here Proclus asks Helios to cleanse him from the stains of matter, to guard him from the Punishing deities (these correspond to evil daemons, see commentary), and illuminate him, i.e. remedy the forgetfulness from which he suffers. Next come prayers for health (vs. 42) and poetical fame (vss. 43-44), justified by the fact that Paiêon and Apollo belong to the series of Helios. Thus we have prayers for the goods of the soul, of the body, and finally for the external good of fame. Finally, in vss. 45-50, Proclus prays that Helios may intervene with the Moirai on his behalf. Helios' power to do so had been established in vss. 15-7. The latter verses are brought back into memory by means of various parallels (see commentary to vss. 15-7).

Commentary

Tr. 1-4: *Hearken, king of noeric fire, Titan holding the golden bridle, / hearken, dispenser of light, you, o lord, who hold yourself / the key to the life-supporting source and channel off from above / a rich stream of harmony into the material worlds.*

vs. 1 Κλῦθι

Ever since Chryses' prayer that triggered the chain of events of the *Iliad* (*Il.* 1, 37), κλύω is a common way to start a prayer. It always carries the connotation of listening *favourably*.[16] Proclus begins *Hymns* I, IV and VII in this way (in fact VII 1 is a Homeric quotation, see commentary *ad loc.*). At the end of each hymn (*H.* I 35, IV 14, VII 51) the same verb is repeated but now with epic reduplication. This type of ring composition recurs in the *Orphic Hymns* (2, 1 and 13; 8, 1 and 20; 28, 1 and 11). We need not necessarily conclude from this, however, that Proclus was inspired by the *Orphic Hymns*, for in the latter case epic reduplications are absent.

vs. 1 πυρὸς νοεροῦ βασιλεῦ

The sun is the king of the visible universe. He consists of noeric fire. It is precisely because of this noeric fire that the sun is the king of this world.

[16] Race 1982: 10 n. 16.

In making fire the constituent of the sun, Proclus follows the authority of Plato *Tim.* 40a (the Demiurge constructs the heavens out of a mixture of the four elements in which fire predominates) and the Chaldaean Oracles against Aristotle's claim that the heavenly bodies consist of a fifth element, aether. For this discussion, see especially *In Tim.* II 42, 9-44, 24 and 49, 12 ff. In order to guarantee the special status of the heavenly bodies Proclus distinguishes between the sublunary fire and that of the heavens.[17] The latter is a 'divine fire', 'an image of the noeric fire' (*In Tim.* II 43, 30: θεῖον πῦρ, μίμημα τε τοῦ νοεροῦ πυρός). This noeric fire is a concept which Proclus borrows from the Chaldaean Oracles, see Frr. 37, 4 and 81, 1, quoted by Proclus *In Parm.* III 800, 20ff. and IV 941, 27-8.

The fire of the sun appears to be more than just an image of the noeric fire. According to Proclus' interpretation of the *Timaeus* (*Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 62, 25ff.), the sun is characterized by a double procession from the Demiurgic Nous. In its humbler manifestation it is just one of the heavenly bodies. According to (Proclus' interpretation of) *Ti.* 39b4, however, the Demiurge himself gave the sun its light 'not from a material substrate, but from himself.' Hence it is also called 'noeric light' (νοερὸν φῶς, see e.g. *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 61, 7 and 15). This light does two things: on the one hand it creates order and harmony in the universe (see *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 68, 7-10); on the other hand it elevates all things to the Demiurgic Nous (see *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 64, 23-6), a central doctrine in Neoplatonic theurgical practice.[18] Proclus repeats the same doctrine in his commentary on the *Timaeus* (*In Tim.* III 80, 31-83, 17), cf. also *Theol. Plat.* II 7, pp. 43, 13-51, 19 (discussion of the comparison from the *Republic*).[19] Admittedly, light is not fire. However, the sun emits light because it consists of fire, and it seems plausible to assume that it is noeric fire, i.e. fire originating from the Demiurgic Nous, which

[17] For a more elaborate discussion of the earthly and heavenly fire, see Siorvanes 1996: 235-247.

[18] Fauth 1995: 135f. wrongly believes that Helios is the mediator between the visible cosmos and the One itself. True, the sun is an *eikon* of the One, see vs. 34, but the discussion in *Theol. Plat.* VI c. 12 makes it clear that the sun mediates between us and the Demiurgic Nous. It would run counter to Neoplatonic thought if it were different. The human soul can only ascend gradually, see chapter II § 3.2. The sun is separated from the One by many intermediate layers.

[19] The passage contains no explicit reference to the *Tim.* See, however, p. 45, 9-10 and the accompanying note by Saffrey-Westerink for the idea that the sun takes its light from the intelligible world).

emits the noeric light. For the Chaldaean background of this theory, see Lewy 1978²: 150-155 (the sun derives its light or fire from Aion) and p. 203 for its soterological implications: the derivation of the solar fire from the transcendent light accounts for the peculiar properties of the rays. They take their origin from pure Intellect and accordingly have the effect on the initiate of a spiritual illumination, which results in the elevation of the soul to the transcendent world of the supreme intelligence.

The sun is the ruler of this universe because of its special origin. According to *Theol. Plat.* VI 12 p. 63, 20-3, the sun is superior even to all other gods in the cosmos (ἔλαχεν ὑπεροχὴν πρὸς τοὺς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ θεοὺς ὁ Ἥλιος), because of its superior existence (τὴν προηγουμένην ὑποστασιν). It is the *hegemonikon* part (ἡγεμονικῆς ἰδιότητος) of the universe. For that reason it is called 'king of everything visible' (βασιλεὺς τοῦ ὁρατοῦ παντός), a reference to Plato *R.* 509d, see *In Tim.* III 82, 23-27. For the sun as king of this world because of its special light, see further *Theol. Plat.* II 4, p. 32, 5-7 (ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἥλιος) and p. 95 the additional note 2 to p. 32 by Saffrey-Westerink for a discussion of Helios as *basileus* in Proclus and other Neoplatonist authors, notably Iamblichus and Julian. The latter even wrote a complete treatise entitled ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΑ ΗΛΙΟΝ.

Although Proclus' theory concerning the noeric fire of the sun primarily derives from an interpretation of passages from Plato *Timaeus* and *Republic* inspired by Chaldaean theology, it should be added that it has a parallel in the Stoic tradition. For the Stoics, god is a noeric entity, which takes the form of designing fire (τεχνικὸν πῦρ) which permeates the world. It is this designing fire, which may also be called noeric fire, which is the cause of the cosmos, i.e. the world as a well-ordered whole.[20] According to Zeno, the heavenly bodies consist of it. The sun, the moon and the other stars are 'intelligent and prudent and have the fieriness of designing fire.' This fire causes 'growth and preservation.'[21] Chrysippus holds that the *nous* of the universe, its leading (*hegemonikon*) part, is the *ouranos*, heaven. Cleanthes limits this function even to the sun alone.[22] For the theme

[20] Note that the Stoic god is thus not a detached craftsman as the Platonic Demiurge, but an actual constituent of the world. In this Proclus differs from the Stoics, for in his case the Demiurge illuminates the sun, while he himself stays clear of the material world.

[21] Stobaeus 1 213, 15-21 = *SVF* 1, 120.

[22] Diogenes Laertius 7, 138.

of Helios as king in other texts ranging from Philo to magic papyri, see Fauth 1995: 151.

vs. 1 χρυσήνιε

From Homer (e.g. *Il.* 6, 205, *Od.* 8, 285) to Nonnus (*D.* 44, 253) a common epithet in connection with gods, whose standard means of transport is a chariot. It is especially appropriate in the case of Helios the driver of the shining solar chariot, see *PGM* II 91 (ed. Preisendanz), cf. Sophocles *Aj.* 847 χρυσόνωτον ἡνίαν.[23] Gold, being the most precious metal, is the favourite material of the gods in general.[24] However, it is especially associated with the sun, because the gold-like radiance of the latter, see e.g. Euripides *Hec.* 635f.: τὰν καλλίσταν (sc. Helena) ὁ χρυσοφαὴς Ἅλιος αὐγάζει.

For Proclus, this is probably more than just an *epitheton ornans.* According to him too, gold belongs to the sun (*In Tim.* I 43, 5). It is thus a theurgical *symbolon* of that deity. A reference to it may activate the sun's *sympatheia* and thus add to the effectiveness of this prayer.

vs. 1 Τιτάν

Helios, the Moon, and Aurora are the children of Theia and Hyperion (Hesiod *Th.* 371-374), two of the Titans produced by Gaia and Ouranos (Hesiod *Th.* 134-5). As such he is in fact a Hyperionid (*Od.* 12, 176) rather than a Titan.[25] All the same, Helios is often invoked by that name, see e.g. Empedocles DK 31B 38, 6, Synesius *H.* III (V) 20, VIII (IX) 50, *Orphic Hymns* 8, 2.

vs. 2 φάους ταμία

Both the expressions φάους ταμία and ἐξοχετεύων (vs. 4) seem to take their inspiration from the Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 60.[26] Proclus *In Tim.* II 9, 17-8 refers to these verses when he discusses a possible objection by Aristotle against Proclus' thesis that whatever is visible is visible because it participates in fire. Aristotle would probably point

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[23] For literature on the solar chariot, see Fauth 1995: 2 n.6.

[24] According to Kirk 1985: 331 commenting on *Il.* 4, 2.

[25] On the fact that Helios, although not a child of Gaia and Ouranos, is called a Titan, see Rudhardt 1991: 276f.

[26] The title ταμία is however not restricted to the *Chaldaean Oracles*, see e.g. *PGM* II 88 (ed. Preisendanz): χαῖρε, πυρὸς ταμία, cf. Plato *R.* 508b: the power to see is given by the sun to the eye as a flow (ταμιευομένην ὥσπερ ἐπίρρυτον). Synesius *H.* I (III) 36, perhaps also inspired by the Chaldaean Oracles, invokes the sun as ὁσιᾶν ψυχᾶν | ἅγιος ταμίας.

to the 'chorus of the stars, and the great sun' as counterexamples. As outlined above at vs. 1 πυρὸς νοεροῦ βασιλεῦ, Aristotle, contrary to Proclus, believes that they consist not of fire but of aether. Proclus appeals to the Oracles which say that the sun is πῦρ πυρὸς ἐξοχέτευμα and πυρὸς ταμίαν ('a fire that is a channel of fire', 'a dispenser of fire'). It will be observed that in these verses the sun is not the dispenser and channel of fire, but that of light and harmony. However, given the fact that Proclus does not use the words ταμία and ἐξοχετεύων anywhere else — in the latter case he prefers ἐποχετεύω, see for example *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 64, 19 — a reference to these verses is very likely.

vss. 2-3 ζωαρκέος, ὦ ἄνα, πηγῆς | αὐτὸς ἔχων κληῖδα

A divinity who holds the key to something has the power to grant that thing or to withhold it. The image is found both in Chaldaean and Orphic sources, see for example Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 197 (quoted by Damascius) and Proclus *In Tim.* III 101, 14 in the context of Orphic theology. However, it is such an ordinary expression in Greek poetry from Pindar (see e.g. *Pyth.* 8, 4) to Nonnus (see for example *D.* 9, 86) that there is no reason to assume that Proclus borrowed it from some arcane source.

Proclus does not refer here to the commonplace that the sun is the source of all life. The Demiurge has that function. On the one hand, the source surpasses the one who has access to it in importance. In an aretology it is thus more appropriate to celebrate the sun as that source, if that had indeed been what Proclus had in mind. On the other hand, according to Proclus *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 56, 20ff., there are many sources (πολλαί πηγαί) in the demiurgic monad. Among other things, the Demiurge is the source of the sun as a celestial body (Proclus refers here to *Tim.* 38cd). For this reason he calls the Demiurge ὁ πηγαῖος Ἥλιος. It is in this way that the sun is the mediator ('holds the key') between the Demiurge, the source of life, and this world.

vss. 3-4 ὑλαίοις ἐνὶ κόσμοις | ὑψόθεν ἁρμονίης ῥύμα πλούσιον ἐξοχετεύων

According to Plato *R.* 509d2f., Helios is king of the sensible — hence material (ὑλαίοις) — world. His harmony creates ordered wholes (κόσμοις) at different levels in this material world: the cosmos of the heavenly bodies (vss.8-12), that of the elements (vss. 13-4), of music

(vss. 18-20) and of health (21-3). For harmony as one of the four characteristic powers of Helios, see *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 61, 9-11. The verb ἐξοχετεύων alludes to Chaldaean oracles Fr. 61 (=Proclus *In Tim.* II 9, 17), see commentary to vs. 2 φάους ταμία. Lewy 1978²: 155 n. 321 explains: 'the solar fire is poured out in rays (ὀχετοί) downwards to the earth.' The fire/light of the sun is its special noeric fire (see vs. 1 with commentary) which has the power to impose harmony on the disorderly material realm.

> **Tr. 5-7:** *Hearken: for you, being above the middlemost seat of aether / and in possession of the very brilliant disk, the heart of the cosmos, / has filled everything with your intellect-awakening providence.*

vs. 5 μεσσατίην γὰρ ἐὼν ὑπὲρ αἰθέρος ἕδρην

1. *Textual matters*

The text of the MSS. (followed here) has been doubted in the past without good reason. As Wilamowitz 1907: 275 n. 1 suggested, and Vogt 1957ᵇ: 360-365 defended at length, ὑπὲρ should be connected with μεσσατίην ἕδρην instead of αἰθέρος, a genitive depending on the accusative μεσσατίην ἕδρην. In classical Greek in general ὑπὲρ + accusative implies a movement, whereas movement is absent here. However, later Greek produces numerous examples of ὑπὲρ + accusative without a sense of movement, see e.g. Proclus *Hyp.* IV § 54, p. 113, 17f. ed. Manitius: τοὺς ὑπὲρ ἥλιον (the planets above the sun). For other examples see Vogt 1957ᵇ: 363. Would one not expect that the sun is on its seat of aether, rather than above it? Vogt 1957ᵇ: 364 ingeniously observes that the sun moves around and that it thus rather hovers above its seat of aether than rests on it.

2. *The sun as the centre of the cosmos* (μεσσατίην ἕδρην)

Proclus was confronted with two rivalling theories concerning the right order of the five planets, the Sun and the Moon: the Platonic order and that of the Chaldaeans (and Ptolemy).[27] According to

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[27] On the two orders of planets in Proclus, see Siorvanes 1996: 304-311. He claims that Proclus adheres to both orders. The Platonic order is true insofar as it pertains to the physical aspect of the planets, the Chaldaean order is true insofar as it reveals the metaphysical circulations of the planets around the sun. This may well be but, unfortunately, Siorvanes does not produce evidence in favour of Proclus' support of the Platonic order. For Proclus' support of the Chaldaean order for the reason that it has been revealed by the gods themselves, see, e.g., *In RP.* II 220, 11-

Plato, they are arranged thus: Earth, Moon, Sun, Morning Star (Venus), Hermes (Mercury), followed by the three others (Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn).[28] Here, Proclus adopts the order of the Chaldaean Oracles which place the Sun in the middle with Venus, Mercury and the Moon below and Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn above.[29] This central position of the sun reflects its position as king of the universe:

> For the sun, as the king of all things visible and the one that imitates the demiurgic powers through its rays of light, has all the cosmic rulers (*kosmokratores*, i.e. the other planets) as his bodyguards, while he generates, fills with life and renovates the generations.[30]

3. *Comments on details*

γάρ

Helios should hearken to Proclus' prayers, for (γάρ) he fills all things in the cosmos with his providence which should thus apply to Proclus too.

αἰθέρος

Not the special fifth element of Aristotle, but a special kind of fire from which the heavens are constructed, see ad vs. 1 πυρὸς νοεροῦ βασιλεῦ.

vs. 6 κραδιαῖον

Reference to the Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 58 quoted by Proclus in *In Remp.* II 220, 14f. in a passage in which he opposes the Platonic order of planets to that of the Chaldaeans. The Chaldaean theurgists (Χαλδαίος θεουργῶν) say that God places the solar fire (τὸ ἡλιακὸν πῦρ) at the place of the heart of the universe (κραδίῃς τόπῳ ἐστήριξε), cf. *In Tim.* II 104, 20f.: οἱ δὲ τὸν ἥλιον, ὡς ἐν τόπῳ καρδίας, ἱδρυμένον·

The image of the sun as the heart of the cosmos brings out its vital importance. Just as the heart is the cause of life for an organism which causes it to move and to be warm, so the sun is the source of

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20, cf. *In Tim.* III 63, 21-24.

[28] For the Platonic order of the heavenly bodies, see *Tim.* 38cd.

[29] See *In Tim.* III 60, 31-63, 30 and *In RP.* II 219, 20-221, 26.

[30] *In RP* II 220, 25ff.: ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὡς καὶ τῶν ὁρατῶν πάντων βασιλεὺς καὶ τὰς δημιουργικὰς δυνάμεις διὰ τῶν τοῦ φωτὸς ἀκτίνων ἀπομιμούμενος ὑπὸ πάντων δορυφορεῖται τῶν κοσμοκρατόρων, γενν[ῶν τε καὶ] ζωῆς πληρῶν ⟨καὶ⟩ ἀνανεάζων τὰς γενέσεις. For the planets as the bodyguards of the sun, cf. *In RP.* II 59, 1f.

the life in the macro-organism of the cosmos which heats it and sets it in motion (cf. vss. 8-10), as is observed by Theon of Smyrna *Exposito rerum mathematicarum* 187, 13ff. ed. Hiller.

vs. 7 ἐγερσινόοιο προνοίης

'Providence (προνοίης) is the cause of the good things that befall those to whom it is exercised' (Proclus *Providentia* 7, 2f., cf. *El.* § 120, p. 104, 34f.). It is a quality that belongs primarily to the Henads because they are pure goodness (*El.* § 120, p. 104, 31ff.), and to all other lower deities as far as they are good and are thus impelled to bestow their goodness on their inferiors, cf. my commentary to *H.* II 7. The good things Helios bestows on the cosmos are celebrated in the subsequent verses.

One particular aspect of Helios' providence is indicated by the adjective 'intellect-awaking' (ἐγερσίνοος). Helios scatters the dark cloud that surrounds the soul and illuminates it with noeric light (vss. 40-1) so that it remembers the divine world about which it had forgotten (vs. 32). For the adjective, see *H.* III 4 with my commentary and *H.* VI 7.

Tr. 8-10: *The planets, girded with your ever-blooming torches, / through unceasing and untiring dances, / always send life-producing drops down for earthlings.*

vss. 8-9 ζωσάμενοι δὲ πλάνητες ἀειθαλέας σέο πυρσοὺς
αἰὲν ὑπ' ἀλλήκτοισι καὶ ἀκαμάτοισι χορείαις

The regular circular movements of the planets are often compared to dances (χορεία) in classical literature, see e.g. Euripides *El.* 467, Plato *Ti.* 40c3f. with Proclus commentary *In Tim.* III 145, 32, 1-7 and 149, 24-28, Julian *Or.* XI [IV] *(On King Helios)* c. 9, 135a. For a book-length discussion of this image in Antiquity, see Miller 1986, esp. pp. 414-482 on Proclus.[31] Proclus explains these cosmic dances in accordance with his doctrine of the noeric fire of the sun:

> For that reason (the noeric light, RMB) too, Helios strikes them (the planets, RMB) with awe when he appears, and they all want to dance around him and be filled with that light, and it is for that reason that this world is beautiful and sunlike.[32]

[31] Miller should be used with care. His translation of the hymn to Helios is not a success.

[32] *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 63, 7-10: Διὸ καὶ ἐξέπληξεν αὐτοὺς ὁ Ἥλιος φανείς, καὶ

The reason that the planets want to be filled by that light is that 'everything in the cosmos receives its perfection and being' (*Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 63, 14f.) from the light of the sun. Moreover, Helios creates all the encosmic light (*o.c.* 12, p. 63, 17-18), hence the planets are said to be girded with Helios' ever blooming torches (ζωσάμενοι δὲ πλάνητες ἀειθαλέας σέο πυρσοὺς).

The dances of the planets are said to be tireless (ἀκάματος). In Homer ἀκάματος is an epithet for Helios, see *Il.* 18, 239 and 484. For examples after Homer, see e.g. *Homeric Hymn to Helios* 7, *Orphic Hymns* 8 (to Helios), 3, Vettius Valens p. 318, 18 ed. Pingree. The underlying idea is that the sun rises every day, and will never stop doing so (cf. Basil *Contra Sabellianos P.G.* 31, p. 613d f.: Ἀκάματος δὲ τοῦ ἡλίου ἡ κίνησις, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἄπαυστος). In Greek literature this is never said of the planets. In this case the planets owe this quality to the sun. It is because they are girded with the ever blooming (ἀειθαλής) torches of the sun that they are indefatigable.

vs. 10 ζῳογόνους πέμπουσιν ἐπιχθονίοις ῥαθάμιγγας

The 'life producing drops' caused by the movements of the planets are raindrops, cf. for example Aratus I 889 (ῥαθάμιγγες ὑετοῖο). According to Ptolemy the planets influence the weather on earth. Some constellations of the sun and the planets are supposed to be especially responsible for rain. Ptolemy remarks that Saturn, Jupiter and Mars, in their oriental aspects only, are more productive of moisture from their heliacal rising to their first station.[33]

Saffrey 1984a: 80 offers an alternative interpretation: all planets offer to the mortals their specific gifts (e.g. the moon natural growth, the sun sensations, Jupiter anger and so forth). The drops are these gifts.

Tr. 11-12: *Under the influence of the courses of your chariot, which return to their point of departure, / everything that is born has sprouted up according to the ordinance of the Seasons.*

vss. 11-12 πᾶσα δ' ὑφ' ὑμετέρῃσι παλιννόστοισι διφρείαις
Ὡράων κατὰ θεσμὸν ἀνεβλάστησε γενέθλη.

πάντες περὶ ἐκεῖνον χορεύειν ἐθέλουσι καὶ πληροῦσθαι τοῦ φωτός, καὶ ὁ κόσμος οὗτος καλὸς καὶ ἡλιοειδής.

33 Ptolemy *Tetr.* I 8, for the fact that the planets Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars are meant and that this is about heliacal rising, see the notes by Robbins 1980: 45 (Loeb edition).

The sun is the cause of all generation in the universe (πᾶσα ἀνεβλάστησε γενέθλη). Since the processes of generation depend on the sun, they take place in accordance with its annual cycle (ὑφ' ὑμετέρῃσι παλιννόστοισι διφρείαις), i.e. they follow the seasons (Ὡράων κατὰ θεσμόν).

The sun is the cause of the generation of all sensible things, according to Plato *R.* 509b. Proclus often refers to this passage, see e.g. *Theol. Plat.* II 4, p. 32, 13ff.; VI 12, p. 62, 14-6.

For the use of ὑμέτερος as an equivalent of σός in poets (but never in Attic), see L.-S.-J. *s.v.* ὑμέτερος II. Proclus may use it this way, see e.g. vs. 39 ὑμετέραισιν ἀρωγαῖς. The 'courses which return to their point of departure' refer to the fact that the sun travels annually up and down between Cancer in the north and Capricorn in the south, the so-called 'portals of the sun' which the sun never trespasses. As Macrobius observes, this movement causes the seasons. When the sun reaches Cancer it subjects us to summer heat, for it is directly above us. When it reaches Capricorn it is furthest removed from us and produces winter.[34] The adjective παλίννοστος appears only in late Greek. It is favourite with Nonnus who uses it often in reference to the cycles of the moon, see e.g. *D.* 25, 307: δέκα κύκλα παλιννόστοιο Σελήνης, same expression *D.* 38, 228; 41, 380. For Helios as the driver of the solar chariot, see commentary ad vs. 1 χρυσήνιε.

The processes of generation under the influence of the annual cycle of the sun take place in accordance with the seasons (Ὡράων κατὰ θεσμόν) because the annual cycle of the sun constitutes the cycle of the seasons. See Proclus *In Tim.* III 55, 32f.: καὶ ἡ τῶν ὡρῶν περίοδος ἀποτελεῖται κατ' αὐτόν (sc. the sun, RMB). This is the standard view, see e.g. Ptolemy *Tetr.* I 2 4: very ignorant men, even some dumb animals understand that the sun is responsible for such things as the annual variations of the seasons and the winds; Julian *Or.* XI [IV] *(On King Helios)* c. 27, 147d: Helios is the father of the Seasons because of the turns he makes, i.e. the solstices (τὰς τροπὰς ἐργαζόμενος, ὥσπερ ἴσμεν, πατὴρ Ὡρῶν ἐστιν); *Orphic Hymns* 8 (to Helios), 5, 10; Nonnus *D.* 40, 373f. For the Horai as deities, see e.g. *In RP.* II 16, 10, *In Tim.* I 163, 15ff.

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[34] On the portals of the sun, see, e.g., Porphyry *Antro* 28; Macrobius *In Somnium Scipionis* 2, 7, 6ff.

Tr. 13-14: *The din of the elements clashing with each other / stopped once you appeared from your unspeakable begetter.*

vss. 13-14 στοιχείων δ' ὀρυμαγδὸς ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισιν ἰόντων | παύσατο
The sun establishes harmony between the colliding elements of which the universe consists because of the powers invested in him by the Demiurge.

The elements (στοιχεῖα) as such, because of their opposite qualities, do not go together well. Proclus describes them as if they are waging war against each other. He uses a Homeric vocabulary: in Homer ὀρυμαγδός is the din of fighting men, see e.g. *Il.* 4, 449. The ending ἀλλήλοισιν ἰόντων reflects an Homeric formula used in combat scenes: ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισιν ἰόντες (always last words of a verse), see e.g. *Il.* 3, 15; 5, 14, 5, 630. The Homeric colouring is perhaps intended to call into mind the fight between the river Xanthos and the god of Fire, Hephaistos in *Il.* 21, 324-382. Proclus explains that water, being cold and humid, and fire, being hot and dry, contain the contrary principles which constitute the whole of the world of becoming. It is Aphrodite who, through the force of friendship (*philia*) brings them together in harmony, see *In RP.* I 95, 16-26.

This interpretation of the confrontation between Xanthos and Hephaistos reflects Plato *Ti.* 32b9-c4 and Proclus' discussion of it (*In Tim.* II 53, 13-55, 2). According to Plato it is *philia* which keeps the four elements that constitute the cosmos together with an insoluble bond. Proclus returns to this notion of *philia.* It keeps together and contains the powers of the *stoicheia* in this cosmos. It may be considered a gift of Nature, the World Soul, Nous, or Noeric Being, but ultimately it derives from the unique Demiurge (for the interpretation of the 'unspeakable begetter' as the Demiurge, see below). This is the 'fiery bond of love' (δεσμὸν πυριβριθῆ ἔρωτος) of which the Chaldaean Oracles speak.[35] Proclus quotes Fr. 39, according to which the Paternal Intellect has sown this bond into everything in order that the universe continues to exist for an infinite time, and it is 'because of this love that the elements of this world continue their course' (*In Tim.* II 54, 16: ᾧ σὺν ἔρωτι μένει κόσμου στοιχεῖα θέοντα). The Demiurge brings forth Aphrodite, the deity of love, so that 'beauty, order, harmony, and communion may shine on all encosmic

[35] Note that according to Neoplatonic interpretations this fire is of course not the *stoicheion* fire, but Noeric Fire, see vs. 1.

beings' (*In Tim.* II 54, 21ff: τὴν γὰρ Ἀφροδίτην παρήγαγεν ὁ δημιουργός, ἵνα κάλλος ἐπιλάμπῃ καὶ τάξιν καὶ ἁρμονίαν καὶ κοινωνίαν πᾶσι τοῖς ἐγκοσμίοις).

It is easy to see how Proclus can transpose this function of Aphrodite to Helios. The latter, like Aphrodite, is said to be the cause of beauty, harmony and order in the cosmos.[36] In vss. 3-4 Helios is especially celebrated as the cause of universal harmony. Julian does indeed connect the two in his treatment of Helios. According to him, Aphrodite sustains the demiurgic activities of Helios. She gives *philia* and *henosis*, see *Or.* XI [IV] (*To King Helios*) c. 33, p. 150bc.

vs. 14 φανέντος ἀπ' ἀρρήτου γενετῆρος

Fauth 1995: 134, following Vogt, believes that the unspeakable begetter (ἀρρήτου γενετῆρος) is the One. Their evidence is *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 63, 4: αὐτὸς ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ παραγαγὼν καὶ γεννήσας (sc. Helios).[37] However, the subject there is not the One, but the Demiurge. In the foregoing lines, Proclus describes how, according to Plato *Ti.* 39b4, the light of the sun derives from the Demiurge (cf. my commentary to vs. 1 πυρὸς νοεροῦ βασιλεῦ). Hence Helios appears (φανέντος) from the Demiurge.

The Demiurge is 'unspeakable' (ἄρρητος), for as Plato *Ti.* 28c3f. observed, it is impossible to talk about him to all of mankind. Proclus *In Tim.* I 302, 25-303, 23 offers two interpretations of this remark Firstly, it may reflect the Pythagorean custom not to divulge doctrines about the gods. Secondly, it may refer to the fact that the soul cannot know the essence of the Demiurge by means of a name, a definition, or scientific reasoning, but by intellection (διὰ νοήσεως μόνης) only.[38] Therefore it is incapable of expressing whatever it has 'seen' in a mystical vision of the Demiurge by means of names and words. Proclus appears to favour the second interpretation as being 'a far more august one.'[39]

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[36] See, e.g., *Theol. Plat.* VI c. 12, p. 61, 7-11 (Apollo-Helios destroys the disorder and installs harmony), p. 61, 20-24 (idem), p. 63, 9f. (Helios renders this world beautiful).

[37] Vogt in his citation of the text changes the participia into indicativi.

[38] Discursive knowledge goes with a discursive mode of expression, i.e. language. This discursive mode of expression, however, fails to express noeric knowledge properly: 'For discourse, which takes place by means of composition, cannot present a uniform and simple nature' (*In Tim.* I 303, 15f.).

[39] For a list of the principal interpretations of this passage in Antiquity, see Runia 1986: 111.

Tr. 15-17: *For you the unshakeable choir of the Moirai has yielded. / Back again they wind the thread of compelling destiny, / when you wish it. For all around you dominate, all around you rule by force.*

vss. 15-17 σοὶ δ' ὑπὸ Μοιράων χορὸς εἴκαθεν ἀστυφέλικτος
ἂψ δὲ μεταστρωφῶσιν ἀναγκαίης λίνον αἴσης,
εὖτε θέλεις· περὶ γὰρ κρατέεις, περὶ δ' ἶφι ἀνάσσεις.

The Moirai

The Moirai (Μοιράων χορός) are the three goddesses of Fate. Proclus *In RP.* II 245, 24-246, 4 gives a twofold explanation for the name 'Moirai' (portions). On the one hand, they determine the portions of fortune for everyone (μερίζουσαι), on the other they have divided among themselves their task in three portions (μερισάμεναι). Hesiod *Th.* 904-6 is the first to call the Moirai by name: Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos (cf. Proclus *In RP.* II 207, 29ff. for a reference to this passage). They reappear under these names in Plato *R.* 617b7-621a2 as part of the myth of Er. Proclus discusses this myth in great detail; for the part on the Moirai, see *In RP.* II 239, 19-347, 16. He repeats this discussion in *Theol. Plat.* VI 23, pp. 99, 22-109, 17.

They determine the fortune of each individual by spinning a thread of fate (λίνον αἴσης) of everyone's life, an image which already occurs in *Od.* 7, 196-8. This image recurs in Plato's description of them and is discussed at length by Proclus in his commentary. According to Plato, the eight whorls of the spindle of Necessity which the Moirai use to spin these threads consists of eight concentric hemispheres. These are the celestial spheres. The three Moirai while spinning move these spheres (Plato *R.* 616b1-617d1). Plato thus links the belief that the Moirai determine our future with the ancient belief that our fortunes depend on the stars. Proclus, in his commentary on this passage, states explicitly that 'it is clear that the Moirai steer everything in the cosmos by means of these revolutions, while distributing to everything — souls as well as animals and plants — what belongs to it and spinning for it its due share.'[40]

No one, not even a god, is able to interfere, hence the Moirai are unshakeable (ἀστυφέλικτος) and the fate they determine is compelling (ἀναγκαῖα). Proclus explains that Atropos is called thus because

[40] *In RP.* II 240, 19-22: ἀλλ' ὅτι μὲν αἱ Μοῖραι διὰ τῶν περιόδων τούτων πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κατευθύνουσι, δῆλον, ἑκάστοις ἀπομερίζουσαι τὸ προσῆκον, καὶ ψυχαῖς καὶ ζώοις καὶ φυτοῖς, καὶ ἐπικλώθουσαι τὴν ὀφειλομένην μοῖραν.

she, as the third of the Moirai, takes care that the threads the Moirai have spun cannot be rewound (*In RP.* II 244, 23-24: Ἄτροπον δὲ τρίτην ἀμετάστροφα τὰ κλωσθέντα ἀποτελοῦσαν·).

Helios more powerful than the Moirai

Helios is the exception to the rule. Under his influence the Moirai may indeed rewind (ἄψ δὲ μεταστρωφῶσιν) a thread of fate already spun, i.e. they may change someone's fortune they had already determined. They yield (ὑπὸ εἴκαθεν) to him. The idea that Helios is capable of influencing the Moirai is not restricted to Proclus. Fauth and Saffrey refer to instances in Greek magical papyri.[41] Helios owes this special capacity to the fact that he, as the king of the cosmos, rules over the heavenly bodies and their movements on which our fortunes depend. In this way Helios can interfere with our destiny.[42] See for a clear expression of this idea Macrobius *Sat.* 1, 17, 3: *necesse est ut solem, qui moderatur nostra moderantes* (sc. the heavenly bodies), *omnium quae circa nos geruntur fateamur auctorem.* His ascription of this theory to Plotinus (*ut Plotino constat placuisse*) seems to be based on a highly questionable interpretation of *En.* II 3 [52].[43] Proclus takes the same line as is evident from vss. 48-50. Helios is asked to protect Proclus from whatever harmful threads of fate spun by the Moirai on their spindle of stars, see my commentary *ad loc.*

Proclus discusses the question whether we can compel divine powers to change the future in *De Providentia* 10, 37-39. That discussion is instructive for a correct understanding of this hymn. Proclus observes that if the future cannot be changed, prayers and theurgy (10, 38, 1f.: τὰς εὐχας καὶ τὴν ἱερατικὴν πραγματείαν) would be pointless. In that case, it should not be allowed any more 'to

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41 Fauth 1995: 139; Saffrey 1984ᵃ: 81.

42 Saffrey 1984ᵃ: 80-81 explains Helios' supremacy over the Moirai by pointing to the fact that both the Seasons and the Moirai are daughters of Zeus and Themis. If Helios rules over the Seasons (vs. 12), it is only natural that he should rule over the Moirai too. According to Fauth 1995: 130-131, Helios rules over the Moirai because he has the power to purify and elevate souls and make them thus escape punishments. This is certainly true; however, Helios' domination over the Moirai is not just limited to his ability to make souls escape punishment, but includes e.g. also the power to save someone from physical death, see below. This cannot be explained in terms of purification.

43 Although Plotinus acknowledges that the stars to some modest degree influence our fortunes. However, he limits this role to a bare minimum and nowhere voices the theory about the sun Macrobius ascribes to him. Probably this misunderstanding is due to 'a hasty perusal of the original texts typical of a Roman man of letters' (formulation Gersh 1986: 509).

stretch out the hands upwards and to make supplications to those who can suspend the celestial influences' (10, 38, 3f.: οὐδὲ ἀνατείνειν τὰς χεῖρας οὐδὲ ἱκετείας γίνεσθαι δώσομεν πρὸς τοὺς ἀναστέλλειν δυναμένους τὰ οὐράνια ῥεύματα). Apollo, for example, would in vain give oracles about what people have to do in order to escape the penalties which the celestial cycles inflict on them (10, 38, 7f.: *eas que a celestibus periodis appensas penas*). These are the penalties inflicted upon us for our way of life, such as reincarnation. Proclus hastens to assure us that prayers and theurgy are really useful: a glimpse in Greek and non-Greek history books proves this (10, 38, 10ff.). It should be stressed that the power of theurgy to influence our fate is not just limited to the major issue of eschatological punishment. In the case of an illness for example, it is possible to block lethal evil powers by means of favourable powers that cause recovery by means of theurgy (ἡ ἱερατική), see 10, 39, 8-14. Compare the vague τι οὐλοόν spinned by the Moirai in vss. 48-9.

The hymn to Helios as an attempt to influence the future

The present hymn is an expression of Proclus' belief that we can indeed influence our determined fate. It is a theurgical prayer, explicitly presented as a supplication (vs. 36: ἱκεσίην πολυδάκρυον) in order to escape punishment (vs. 37f.: ποινῶν δ' ἀπάνευθε φυλάσσοις πρηΰνων θοὸν ὄμμα Δίκης, ἣ πάντα δέδορκεν, cf. also my commentary to vss. 27-32), but also to obtain more worldly goods like health (vs. 42: σώματι δ' ἀρτεμίην τε καὶ ἀγλαόδωρον ὑγείην, for the salutary powers of the *seira* of the sun see vss. 21-3).

The idea that Helios may interfere with the Moirai and suspend harmful celestial influences is to my mind pivotal to this hymn. The structure of the hymn underlines this. Vss. 15-17 close the first part of the aretology, which celebrates the cosmic rule of Helios. The verses that end the hymn recall the verses that close the first part of the aretology. In vs. 45 Proclus asks Helios for unshakeable bliss (ὄλβον ἀστυφέλικτον). This may be contrasted with the choir of the Moirai which is only seemingly unshakeable. Helios is capable of altering their decisions, but no power can take away whatever the king of the cosmos has given. The phrase 'if you please' returns (vs. 46 εἴ κε θέλοις). The reason why Helios can do such things is the same: because of his enormous power (vs. 47 κρατερὴν γὰρ ἔχεις καὶ ἀπείριτον ἀλκήν). Both these expressions might originate from the same (Chaldaean?) distich, see commentary to vs. 47. Finally, we note

that the imagery of the cosmic spindle of the Moirai returns (vss. 48-9).

ἶφι ἀνάσσεις

A Homeric phrase, see especially *Il.* 1, 38 and 452 said of Apollo, who is often identified with Helios (for this identification, see *Introduction*). Other occurrences in Homer: *Il.* 6, 478; *Od.* 11, 284; 17, 443.

> **Tr. 18-20:** *From your chain the king of the song that obeys the divine, / Phoibos, sprung forth. Singing inspired songs to the accompaniment of the kithara, / he calms the great wave of deep-roaring becoming.*

vss. 18-19 σειρῆς δ' ὑμετέρης βασιλεὺς θεοπειθέος οἴμης | ἐξέθορεν Φοῖβος·

The concept of *seira* (σειρά, cord, chain, series) goes back to an allegorical interpretation of the golden *seira* in Homer *Il.* 8, 19. Zeus boasts that if he would let down a golden cord from the heavens, with all gods and goddesses pulling at the lower end and Zeus at the upper end, they would still be unable to drag Zeus down to the earth.[44]

The term indicates a group of entities which have the same cause to the effect that they share its distinctive property.[45] The word is used in slightly different contexts. Proclus may speak of the unique *seira* (μιὰ σειρά), which spans the whole of reality: all things share the property of one-ness (otherwise they would not exist) because they all depend on the One as *the* ultimate cause.[46]

On the other hand, he also speaks of different *seirai* (plural): groups of entities which depend on a cause and thus share in a quality that is characteristic of that particular group. In this sense Proclus speaks here of the series of Helios (σειρῆς δ' ὑμετέρης). Helios as a leader-god is the cause of a whole series of products which share its distinctive characteristics.[47] For Helios as the head of a series, see also *De Sacrificio* p. 148, 12-18. Cf also *H.* II 1f.: this hymn celebrates the series of Aphrodite and the source of the series itself,

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44 For a complete survey of allegorical interpretations of this episode, see Lévêque 1959; for Proclus, see esp. pp. 61-75 'Appendice I: Les chaînes divines chez Proclus.'

45 As defined by Proclus in *El.* § 97, p. 86, 8-26.

46 See, e.g., *El.* § 119, p. 104, 16-30.

47 See chapter IV § 4.4 for a discussion of leader-gods causing likeness among their products because of their distinctive property which they impart on them.

i.e. Aphrodite; *H.* VII 2: Athena springs forth from the summit of series of Zeus.

A *seira* implicates hierarchy. The more a product shares in its cause, i.e. the higher it is positioned on the chain, the more perfect it is. If Phoibos springs from the chain of Helios, i.e. a chain of which Helios is the cause, Phoibos is inferior to Helios and therefore not Helios himself, as both Fauth and Saffrey have it.[48] The Apollo of the last triad of the hyper-encosmic gods (the so-called elevating triad) is a likely candidate among the many different manifestations of Apollo (see chapter III § 2.2, *Figure* 1). This Apollo is not only inferior to Helios, but the minimal description of this god squares with the characteristics of Apollo as a musician in the hymn. See *Theol. Plat.* VI 22, p. 98, 14-24 for the description of this triad, and esp. p. 98, 20-24 for Apollo.

Apollo is called 'king of the song that is obedient to god' (βασιλεὺς θεοπειθέος οἴμης), i.e. divinely inspired songs (θέσκελα). For Proclus' concept of inspired poetry, see chapter VI § 2.2.

vss. 19-20 κιθάρῃ δ' ὑπὸ θέσκελα μέλπων | εὐνάζει μέγα κῦμα βαρυφλοίσβοιο γενέθλης

Apollo plays on the *kithara* (κιθάρα), the major string instrument of professional and public performance. For a description of the instrument, see A. D. Barker *OCD* 1996[3]: 1004. In the oracle in Porphyrius *Vita Plotini* 22, 15 and 63 Apollo plays the *kithara* too, cf. the commentary by L. Brisson and J.-M. Flamand on that passage in L. Brisson, J.-L. Cherlonneix *et al.* 1992: 572f.

His harmonic music calms the noise of the great gulf of loud-roaring generation (εὐνάζει μέγα κῦμα βαρυφλοίσβοιο γενέθλης). The comparison of the world of becoming to a stormy sea is common in the hymns. Often it endangers the soul (see commentary to vs. 30). In this case, however, it refers primarily to the turmoil of the world of becoming which Apollo brings to a rest by introducing harmony to it, not unlike the way Helios puts an end to the hostilities between the elements (vss. 13-4). For Apollo who causes cosmic harmony by means of his music, see esp. *In Crat.* § 174 p. 98, 10-18, § 176 p. 101, 22-102, 9. It is a traditional element in hymns to the sun, see e.g. Mesomedes vss. 17-20 with commentary by Heitsch 1960: 147

[48] See Fauth 1995: 133, Saffrey 1984[a]: 81-84. This is not to say that Helios may not be equated to Apollo at all. Saffrey quotes *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 58, 1ff. according to which Helios is indeed Apollo.

and Orphic Hymn 8 (to Helios) 9. The underlying Pythagorean motive is that of the cosmic harmony of the spheres. From Eratosthenes onwards, the planetary scale is brought in connection with a divine lyre which causes cosmic music. As a result, music made on a lyre was supposed to make the ascent of the soul to the stars possible, see West 1983: 29-33.

Tr. 21-23: *From your evil-averting band that imparts pleasant gifts Paiêon / sprouted, and he imposed his health / by filling the wide cosmos with harmony wholly devoid of harm.*

vss. 21-3 σῆς δ' ἀπὸ μειλιχόδωρος ἀλεξικάκου θιασείης
Παιήων βλάστησεν, ἑὴν δ' ἐπέτασσεν ὑγείην,
πλήσας ἁρμονίης παναπήμονος εὐρέα κόσμον.

Paiêon (Παιήων) is the epic form of the name Paian, the physician of the gods, see e.g. Homer *Il.* 5, 401f., Hesiod Fr. 307, 2. He is associated and sometimes equated with Apollo and Helios, see e.g. Macrobius *Sat.* 1, 17, 13-21, *Orphic Hymn* (to Helios) 8, 12, Nonnus *D.* 40, 407. Proclus seems to do so in the above mentioned passage from *In Crat.* (see commentary vss. 19-20) when he makes medicine one of the provinces of Apollo to whom he attributes paionic (i.e. healing) activities (*In Crat.* § 176, p. 100, 15). In this hymn, Paiêon is presented as another deity that originates from the series of Helios (vs. 21 σῆς δ' ἀπὸ θιασείης). The mild gifts (μειλιχόδωρος) of the gods of this group are enumerated in this hymn. The epithet ἀλεξίκακος, repeated in vs. 39, may reflect contemporary cultic practice in Athens, for according to Proclus' older contemporary[49] Macrobius *Sat.* 1, 17, 15 the Athenians call Apollo who diverts illnesses by this name.

Just as Helios and Apollo, Paiêon causes harmony in the cosmos. Sickness, according to Plato *Ti.* 81e6ff., is caused by a disturbance of the mixture of the four elements of which a body consists, cf. Proclus *In Tim.* II 62, 32-63, 4. Health (ὑγεῖα), on the contrary, consists in the harmonious ordering of them (*In Crat.* § 174 p. 99, 8-11). The Demiurge made the world so that it would not be subject to sickness and ageing (Plato *Ti.* 33a2). It is Paiêon's task to guarantee the health of the cosmos, i.e. to maintain its harmony, see Proclus *In Tim.* II 63, 9-11, cf. *In Crat.* § 174 p. 99, 18-21. See for the same idea Julian

[49] For the two possible dates of Macrobius' birth (either somewhere between 350-360 or between 385-90), see Guittard 1997: x-xi cf. Flamant 1977: 96-126. The *Saturnalia* must be dated roughly after 408-410, see Flamant 1977: 87.

Or. XI [IV] (*To King Helios*) 39, 153b, who calls Asclepius the Saviour of the Universe; cf. *Orphic Hymn* 11 (To Pan) 6 for Pan as the cause of cosmic harmony. As Syrianus *In Metaph.* 25, 6-26, 5 explains, the same deity that guarantees the cosmic health is also the cause of the health in our mortal bodies. Proclus thus prays to Helios and his series to grant him health (vs. 42).

Tr. 24-26: *People honour you in hymns as the famous father of Dionysus. / And again some praise you in songs as Euios Attis in the extreme / depths of matter, whereas others praise you as pretty Adonis.*

vs. 24 σὲ κλυτὸν ὑμνείουσι Διωνύσοιο τοκῆα·
According to standard Greek theology, Zeus is the father of Dionysus, see *H.* VII 11-15, esp. vs. 13 with commentary. It has been suggested (e.g. by Saffrey 1994: 21) that Proclus refers to people who identify Helios with Zeus (e.g. Julian *On King Helios Or.* XI [IV] 31, 149bc) and who can therefore conclude that Helios is worshipped as the father of Dionysus (Julian *o.c.* 38, 152d: [Helios] Διονύσου μὲν πατὴρ ὑμνούμενος. Damascius *In Phd.* I § 14 probably reproduces Proclus' opinion when he refers to a triad consisting of Helios-Apollo-Dionysus. This makes Helios the cause, and hence the father of Dionysus. The suggestion that Proclus indeed assumed the existence of this triad is supported by the evidence from this hymn: Helios, Apollo and Dionysus appear in this order, while Helios is superior to the other two.[50]

Dionysus is a deity comparable to Attis and Adonis, both mentioned in the following two verses and in the same grammatical sentence. The three of them die but are then reborn again. Proclus sees in these stories examples of a *symbolikos mythos* about the descent and ascent of the soul. For his interpretation of the myth of Dionysus, see commentary to *H.* VII 11-15.

The Athenian Neoplatonists had a special relationship with Dionysus. Proclus lived in the house that had once belonged to his predecessor, Plutarch of Athens. This house was situated close to the temples of Asclepius and the temple of Dionysus near the theatre. As Castrén 1989: 46f. observes, this is not a mere coincidence. Plutarch's great-grandfather, or grandfather, had been a priest of Dionysus and Asclepius, whereas his son, the hierophant Nestorius, was perhaps

[50] This triad is discussed by Opsomer, forthcoming.

also a priest of Asclepius and Dionysus. Marinus *Vita Procli* § 29 considers the fact that the house was so close to these temples as one of the good fortunes of Proclus. The latter composed an epigram in honour of a statue or a painting of Dionysus in the house of someone called Reginos.[51]

vs. 25 ὕλης δ' αὖ νεάτοις ἐνὶ βένθεσιν εὔιον Ἄττην

Attis is the lover of the Great Mother, Cybele. This relationship is disturbed because of Attis' adultery with a nymph. Subsequently he is struck by madness, castrates himself and dies. In some versions he is brought back to life by Cybele. According to other versions, the blood that he spills at this occasion causes a violet to grow. This story is generally supposed to refer to the annual cycle of growing and perishing in nature, both in Antiquity and modern times. Cybele represents Mother Earth from whom year after year the vegetation springs up again. Attis represents the vegetation which dies, but never completely, since it will return the following year.[52]

The myth of Attis fascinated the later Neoplatonists. According to Marinus *Vita Procli* § 33, Proclus wrote a now lost book on the Great Mother and Attis in which he expounded the myth in a philosophical way. Two other Neoplatonist interpretations by Macrobius and Julian diverge considerably from each other.[53]

Macrobius *Sat.* I 21, 7-10 follows the current interpretation of the myth as outlined above. The myth of Attis is essentially the same as that of Adonis, for which see commentary to vs. 26. Attis is the sun, which gives us less warmth and heat during the winter, a time of death, but regenerates everything when it returns in springtime.

Julian's interpretation of the story in his treatise on the Great Mother (*Or.* VIII [V]) is far more subtle.[54] In his opinion, the myth is about demiurgic processes and the salvation of the soul. The Great Mother is the source of all demiurgic gods; she herself has no affair with the material world (6, 166cd), a situation not unlike Plato's Demiurge. Attis, her lover, proceeds from the third Demiurge, i.e.

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[51] For this epigram, see Saffrey 1994: 83-85, and Gelzer 1966: 13-36.

[52] This is just one version of the story. On Attis and Cybele, see M.J. Vermaseren, *Cybele and Attis. The Myth and the Cult*, London 1973.

[53] See Bouffartigue 1992: 374-375 for the fact that Macrobius' and Julian's interpretation differ importantly due to the fact that Macrobius follows Porphyry and his type of exegesis, whereas Julian adheres to Iamblichus' approach. He denies having read Porphyry's interpretation (3, 161c).

[54] Saloustios IV 7-11 gives very much the same, be it concise, account as Julian.

Helios (8, 168a). He leaves her and the intelligible world in order to commit adultery with a nymph and descends into the cave of the nymphs, i.e. the material realm (5, 165cd). However, the demiurgic process cannot be allowed to go on infinitely. Attis is therefore stopped by Helios and his Lion. The castration symbolizes the fact that the demiurgic process is brought to an end (7, 167bd). Afterwards he is reconciled with Cybele, i.e. he ascends again to the intelligible realm. Julian observes that the rites in connection with the mysteries of Cybele and Attis are celebrated at the time of the spring equinox. At that moment day and night are equal in length. Whatever is equal is limited, hence this is an excellent day to celebrate the fact that the demiurgic process comes to an end and does not proceed into infinity (9, 168cd).

Julian connects the myth and accompanying rites of Attis to the Chaldaean doctrine of the salvation of the soul. Like Attis, the soul is a semi-divine being who descends into the world of becoming. According to Chaldaean doctrines, the sun elevates the souls of the initiated to the intelligible realm in a secret ritual. Julian judges the time of the spring equinox as the best time of the year for such rituals, like the mysteries of Attis and Cybele. This is evident from the fact that the sun at that time pulls the vegetation out of the earth. In the same manner he may pull our souls upwards (12, 171d-173a).

Julian's interpretation may well be illustrative for Proclus' interpretation of the myth. Although Julian claims that he wrote the treatise in one night without previous study (19, 178d-179a), Bouffartigue 1992: 375-379 shows that his interpretations depends on an explanation of the myth as offered by the priesthood of the Magna Mater and that he is inspired by Iamblichian philosophy. Proclus would certainly have taken notice of the interpretation of the priesthood and his work is imbued with influences from Iamblichus. The words ὕλης νεάτοις ἐνὶ βένθεσιν indicate a kinship between Julian's and Proclus' interpretation.[55] Julian stresses that Attis, the demiurgic emanation of the sun, descends as deep as possible into the realm of matter: see e.g. 3, 161c: ἄχρι τῆς ἐσχάτης ὕλης; 7, 167b: ἄχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων τῆς ὕλης. Proclus hints at a similar idea here.[56] Note also the

[55] The formulation ὕλης βένθεσιν is Homeric, see *Od.* 17, 316. Note however that in Homer ὕλη refers to a forest, not matter.

[56] Saffrey 1984[a]: 84 too refers in connection with this verse to the fact that Attis descends to the bottom of the material realm. However, he interprets this as Helios on his nocturnal voyage through Hades.

fact that both Julian (e.g. 12, 172d τὸν ἑπτάκτινα θεὸν ἀνάγων δι' αὐτοῦ τὰς ψυχάς) and Proclus (vs. 34 ψυχῶν ἀναγωγεῦ) stress the function of the sun as elevator of souls.

The adjective εὔιος refers to the cries of joy during the celebration of the rites. It is especially associated with Dionysus, cf. Proclus' epigram on the statue or painting of Dionysus vs. 1 εὐαστὴν Διόνυσον with the commentary by Gelzer 1966: 16 for numerous parallels in the *Orphic hymns*.

vs. 26 ἄλλοι δ' ἁβρὸν Ἄδωνιν ἐπευφήμησαν ἀοιδαῖς.
Adonis is a beautiful youth (hence ἁβρός, a standard epithet for Adonis, see e.g. Bion *Epitaphius* 79; Nonnus *D.* 6, 365) and a lover of Aphrodite. According to the most popular version of the myth, he is killed by a boar while hunting. Aphrodite claims him back from the goddess of the Underworld, Persephone. She in her turn, however, has also fallen in love with Adonis. In the end they agree to share him. For half of the year, Adonis stays with Persephone in the realm of the death, the other half he dwells in the world of the living with Aphrodite, see e.g. Macrobius *Sat.* 1, 21, 1-6. In Antiquity the myth was generally taken to refer to the annual cycle of the vegetation that dies but then shoots up again (cf. vs. 25 the case of Attis). Festivals commemorating the death of Adonis were annually celebrated, see e.g. the description by Theocritus *Id.* XV of such a festival in Alexandria. During this festival an 'Adonis' was sung (Theocritus XV 96 τὸν Ἄδωνιν ἀείδειν) in front of a tapestry representing the dead Adonis, probably at different moments by various competing singers.[57] Theocritus himself continues with the text of such a song (XV 100-144), of which Bion's *Epitaphius Adonidos* is another example. Perhaps Proclus refers here to such songs (ἀοιδαῖς). One may also think of the *Orphic Hymn* 56 on Adonis which was sung during initiation rites (vs. 12).

Proclus, who has little to say about Adonis, interprets him as a creative force that constantly renews what perishes. He is the third of the Demiurgical triad of Zeus, Dionysus, and Adonis. Zeus is the Demiurge who creates the cosmos, Dionysus is the Demiurge who separates the parts of the whole, and finally Adonis, who 'makes anew what is born and perishes,' see *In RP.* II 8, 15-23, cf. *In Tim.* I 446, 1-11.

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[57] See Gow vol. II 1950: 291f. commentary to *Id.* XV vs. 96.

Proclus nowhere identifies Adonis with Helios. Macrobius *Sat.* 1, 21, 2-4, who does, gives the following interpretation of the myth: the boar that kills Adonis is a symbol of the winter.[58] The winter 'wounds' the sun, which thus gives less warmth and light to us, and in this way causes the death of living beings. For the half of the year that the sun traverses the six lower signs of the zodiac Adonis is temporally dead. He is with Proserpina/Persephone. At that time of the year, Venus/Aphrodite mourns for Adonis: the days are shorter. When the sun traverses the six higher signs of the zodiac, he is with Venus: the days are longer and there is more light.

Proclus probably adheres to a more lofty interpretation of this myth. Adonis, like Dionysus and Attis, dies but is then brought back to life again. In the case of the latter, this is interpreted as the fall into the realm of matter and return of the soul. It seems likely that the same goes for Adonis.

Tr. 27-32: *The threat of your swift whip holds fears / for the wild-tempered daemons, noxious to men, / who prepare evil for our miserable souls, in order that forever, in the gulf of heavy-resounding life, / they suffer once they have fallen under the yoke of the body / with the result that they forget the bright-shining court of the lofty Father.*

vss. 27-29 δειμαίνουσι δὲ σεῖο θοῆς μάστιγος ἀπειλὴν
δαίμονες ἀνθρώπων δηλήμονες, ἀγριόθυμοι,
ψυχαῖς ἡμετέραις δυεραῖς κακὰ πορσύνοντες

Daemons (δαίμονες) are divine beings of a low status: they are close to the beings in the material realm (*Decem Dub.* 15, 8). There are daemons that help the soul to ascend, but also daemons who retain impure souls in the realm of matter. The latter are the daemons referred to here. Elsewhere, Proclus stresses that there are no bad daemons.[59] Impure souls cannot be allowed to touch the pure without disturbing the order of things (*Mal. Subsist.* 17). Proclus aptly compares this to a classroom situation: instructors whose task it is to remedy the faults of their pupils by punishing them cannot

[58] Note that in classical and Hellenistic times, Adonis represents the plants that come up in springtime, but die because of the heath of the summer.

[59] This is a remarkable view, for both the Chaldaeans (on which see Lewy 1978^2: 235-240) and most of the Neoplatonists, including Porphyry (see e.g. *De Abs.* II 38), and Iamblichus (see e.g. *Myst.* IV 7) were convinced that there are evil daemons. This dissident view is a direct result of his analysis of the nature of evil, the cause of which he locates on the level of the human soul.

allow those whose work is deficient to have better places than they actually deserve (*Mal. Subsist.* 17, 13-5). When they are called here 'noxious for men' (ἀνθρώπων δηλήμονες), 'ferocious' (ἀγριόθυμοι) and imagined as 'preparing evil for our souls' (κακὰ πορσύνοντες), they are so from the point of view of the individual soul, not from the cosmic perspective.

At this point a personal and emotional element enters into the hymn. Vs. 28 underlines how horrible these daemons are with two adjectives, whereas in the following verse it are *our* (ἡμετέραις) souls that are threatened by the daemons, including Proclus' own. From now on, the hymn centres around his fears and wishes.

According to the Chaldaean Oracles, the sun can purify the soul from its faults. The souls may thus escape the punishment they deserved and, having become pure, ascend to the pure metaphysical realm (cf. vss. 15-7 with my commentary). Here, Helios is imagined as chasing the punishing daemons away with the whip (μάστιξ) that he normally uses to drive his solar chariot, cf. *Orphic Hymn* 8 (to Helios) 19: (Helios) μάστιγι λιγυρῆι τετράορον ἅρμα διώκων.

vss. 30-31 ὄφρ' αἰεὶ κατὰ λαῖτμα βαρυσμαράγου βιότοιο
σώματος ὀτλεύωσιν ὑπὸ ζυγόδεσμα πεσοῦσαι

The emendation of παθοῦσαι (archetype) into πεσοῦσαι by Wilamowitz 1907: 275 n. 2 has been convincingly defended by Vogt 1957[b]: 356-7.

The 'gulf of heavy-sounding life' (λαῖτμα βαρυσμαράγου βιότοιο) is the material world, cf. vs. 20 μέγα κῦμα βαρυφλοίσβοιο γενέθλης. Water is an image for the material realm in the Platonic tradition at least from Numenius Fr. 30 (ed. Des Places) onwards. Often this is the water of a stormy, loudly roaring sea which may drown one, i.e. the world of matter may completely swallow the descended soul so that he may never again ascend to the metaphysical realm. One of the best known examples of this image is the oracle about Plotinus in Porphyry *Vita Plotini* 22, where the life in a body is called a 'bitter wave' (22, 31 πικρόν κῦμα) consisting of the 'loudly sounding noise of the life in a body' (22, 25 ῥεθέων πολυφλοίσβοιο κυδοιμοῦ, cf. *H.* I 20 εὐνάζει μέγα κῦμα βαρυφλοίσβοιο γενέθλης). The loud noise of the material world stands in contrast to the harmony in the upper world. For a discussion of this image, see Brisson and Flamand in Brisson, Cherlonneix *et al.* 1992: 579 who cite numerous examples and pay special attention to Proclus' hymns.

Often this image of a wave is linked to an allegorical interpretation of the *Odyssey* which was popular with the Neoplatonists. In this interpretation the shipwrecked Odysseus stands for the soul in the material world, trying to reach home, i.e. the metaphysical realm. In the oracle in Porphyry's *Vita Plotini* for example there are numerous allusions to the *Odyssey*.[60] In this hymn there are no such allusions, but see for example *H.* VI 10-12 with my commentary.

Contrary to the imagery of water and waves, that of the ζυγόδεσμον (literally yoke-band here *pars pro toto* for yoke) is not common nor specifically Neoplatonic. According to Lampe it is used metaphorically for the bond of sin broken by Christ, see e.g. Paul Silentarius *Soph. P.G.* 86.2155a). Although the pagan Neoplatonists lack the Christian notion of sin, it is used in a comparable sense here. The souls fall victim to the daemons because they have erred, i.e. turned themselves away from the intelligible and merged themselves into the world of matter. Only Helios may break their bonds by purifying them from their pollution.

vs. 32 λάθοιντο

The optative (λάθοιντο) after the conjunctive (ὀτλεύωσιν) in a final clause indicates that the former action is the intended or potential result of the latter, see Kühner-Gerth 1904^3 II, 2 § 533.6 p. 387: the daemons prepare evil for the souls in order that they may imprison them in the realm of matter with the result that the souls completely forget their celestial origin.

According to Plato, the soul forgets about the metaphysical realm when it descends into the realm of matter, see e.g. *Phaedrus* 250a1ff.; *Phaedo* 72e3ff.; *R.* 621a. Proclus stresses that *all* souls suffer forgetfulness when they descend into the realm of matter (see e.g. *Mal. Subsist.* 21, 15-18). This forgetfulness carries us away from the divine in the stream of matter (cf. vs. 30 λαῖτμα): (The Father opens the way of fire for us) μὴ ταπεινὸν ἐκ λήθης ῥεύσωμεν χεῦμα (*Chal. Phil.* Fr. 2, p. 208, 4-5). Salvation on the other hand consists in the recollection of the divine world, here referred to as the 'court of the Father.' It enables the soul to return to its place of origin away from the realm of matter, see e.g. *H.* III 3-9 with commentary.

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[60] See the commentary on the oracle by L. Brisson and J.-M. Flamand in L. Brisson, J.-L. Cherlonneix *et al.* 1992: 578ff.

vs. 32 πατρὸς … αὐλῆς
In my interpretation the father (πατήρ) is the Demiurge, the Father of the universe (see chapter III § 4.2). Helios, who himself originates from him, is supposed to elevate all things to him, see *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 57, 12-19, cf. the invocation of Helios as *anagogeus* of souls in vs. 34 with my commentary.

The court (αὐλή) of a god is a Chaldaean expression which probably takes it origin from Homer *Od.* 4, 74 Ζῆνος αὐλή.[61] Proclus comments on this expression *Chal. Phil.* Fr. 1 p. 206, 3-6: 'The courts and dwellings of the divine beings are the eternal orders. The 'court open to all' of the Father is the paternal order that receives and contains all souls which have been elevated.'[62] Here order (*taxis*) should be understood as the divine, transcendent world as opposed to the material realm. For an example of a court other than that of the Father, see *H.* II 6 (the court of Aphrodite). That the court of the Father is indeed that of the Demiurge is indicated somewhat below: the ascending soul offers to the Father the *synthêmata* which the latter had sown in the soul 'on occasion of the first appearance of its being' (ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ παρόδῳ τῆς οὐσίας).[63] This is the first birth (*Ti.* 41e3 γένεσις πρώτη) of the souls when they are created by the Demiurge. On that occasion the Demiurge sows two types of *synthêmata* in the soul, see chapter V § 2.1 especially **T. 5.1**. The 'court of the Father', then, is the same place as the paternal harbour referred to in *H.* VI 12 and VII 32.[64] In *H.* VII 36 the dwellings (ἤθεα) of Athena's Father, i.e. Zeus, the Demiurge — another reference to the paternal harbour (see commentary *ad loc.*), — are an equivalent of the paternal αὐλή. See also *In Crat.* § 94, pp. 46, 24-47, 7: at the occasion of the creation of souls they 'go down from the court of Zeus to the world of becoming' (πᾶσα γὰρ ψυχὴ νεοτελὴς ἐκ τῆς τοῦ Διὸς αὐλῆς εἰς τὴν γένεσιν κάτεισιν).

Tr. 33-35: *But, you the best of gods, crowned with fire, blest daemon, / image of the all-creating god, uplifter of souls, hearken …*

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61 Lewy 1978^2: 33 n.92.

62 Αὐλαὶ τῶν θείων καὶ οἰκήσεις αἱ ἀΐδιαι τάξεις. Καὶ ἡ "πανδεκτικὴ αὐλὴ" τοῦ Πατρὸς ἡ πατρικὴ τάξις ἐστίν, ἡ πάσας ὑποδεχομένη καὶ συνέχουσα τὰς ἀναχθείσας ψυχάς·

63 *Chal. Phil.* Fr. 1, p. 206, 19-23.

64 On the important notion of the paternal harbour in Proclus' theory of ascent of the soul, see chapter III § 4.3.

vs. 33 ἀλλά, θεῶν ριστε, πυριστεφές, ὄλβιε δαῖμον

The transition from the aretology to the prayers proper is indicated by ἀλλά. It marks the transition from the arguments for an action (you, Helios, have the power to help me) to the statement of the action requested (therefore do so!).[65] The vocative serves to reinvoke the deity at this critical point in the hymn. This use is well attested in Greek hymns, see e.g. *Homeric Hymn* 8 (to Ares) 15; 20 (to Hephaistos) 8, and frequent in Proclus' own hymns, *H.* II 14; III 10; IV 13; V, 12.

As has been commemorated in the first half of the hymn, Helios holds absolute power over the the universe and its inhabitants, including the divine beings in it like the planets and the Moirai. Hence he is now called the best of these gods in the universe (θεῶν ὤριστε), not, of course, of all gods in general for he is just an image of a superior god who produces everything (vs. 34). Moreover all deities discussed in the first five books of the *Theologia Platonica* are superior to the leader-gods of the sixth book including Helios. Surprisingly, the same verse also calls Helios a blessed daemon (ὄλβιε δαῖμον). Proclus *In Alc.* 70, 11ff. criticizes those who, like Amelius, downgrade the planets from *theoi* to *daemones*. The planets are gods because they rule the universe, commanding the daemons and angels. Probably Proclus is just using *variatio* here while imitating epic Greek and we should not read too much into it. For gods being called *daemones* in epic Greek, see for example *Il.* 1, 222 where the Olympian gods are called *daemones*. Cf. *Orphic Hymn* 34 which calls Apollo — who in the hymn is equated to the sun — both a φωσφόρε δαῖμον (vs. 5) and a θεός (vs. 25).

The poetic πυριστεφές is attested only here and twice in Nonnus (*D.* 2, 549; 8, 289). It is the noeric fire of vs. 1 which grants Helios his superiority in the cosmos and thus his power to help Proclus.

vs. 34 εἰκὼν παγγενέταο θεοῦ, ψυχῶν ἀναγωγεῦ

The invocation of Helios as an *eikon* of the all-creating god is a reference to Plato's famous simile of the sun (*R.* 507a1ff.). Plato calls the sun an image (*R.* 509a9 τὴν εἰκόνα) of the Good. Just as the sun is the cause of the coming to be, growth and nurture of all sensible things, the Idea of the Good is the cause of the being of all intelligible things (*R.* 509b).[66] Proclus stresses that the Good is the unique

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[65] For this use of ἀλλά, see Denniston 1954^2: 13-16; Race 1982: 12 n. 26.

[66] For Proclus' interpretation of this simile, see *Theol. Plat.* II 7, pp. 43, 13-51, 19

first principle of all things, both intelligible and sensible, to which they all reach out (*Theol. Plat.* II 7, p. 45, 22-24). For a celebration of the Good or the One as the cause of all things, from the highest gods down to the material realm in a sort of hymn (οἷον ὑμνήσωμεν), see *Theol. Plat.* II 11, p. 65, 5-15. Cf. Julian *Or.* XI [IV] (*To King Helios*) 5, 132d-133a: Helios is πάντα ὅμοιον to Plato's Good or the One.

An ἀναγωγεύς is usually employed as a designation of a strap holding a shield or a sandal. In the Chaldaean Oracles the word is employed with a new meaning, that of the raiser of souls to a higher, metaphysical, level (Lewy 1978²: 458). According to Proclus, Helios raises the souls to the Demiurgic Nous, i.e. the court of the Father (vs. 32) or paternal harbour (see e.g. *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 61, 14-20 and p. 64, 22-6). Although Proclus assigns an elevating function to other gods too,[67] Helios holds a special place as *the* elevating deity due to his pivotal role in the theurgical rites in which the soul is separated from the body and transported upwards through the rays of the sun. No account of this rite has come down to us, although different Neoplatonist authors hint at it, including Iamblichus, Julian, Syrianus, and Proclus. The evidence has been collected and discussed by Lewy 1978²: 184-200, cf. also Shaw 1995: 216-228.

The invocation of Helios as an *eikon* of the Good and Helios as the raiser of souls to the Demiurge in one verse reflects Proclus' theory of the noeric light of the sun based on *Ti.* 39b (for which see commentary to vs. 1 πυρὸς νοεροῦ βασιλεῦ). Proclus *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 63, 11-64, 2 connects the texts from *Ti.* and *R.* with each other. It is this special light that renders Helios superior to everything in the cosmos. On the one hand, he is the Demiurge of everything that has come into being. On the other, it is because of this light that both souls and superior beings can partake in the journey of elevation (p. 63, 27 τῆς ἀναγωγοῦ πορείας). For this reason, Plato calls the sun in the simile in the *Republic* the offspring of the Good. For the same combination of *Ti.* 39b and the simile of the sun from the *Republic*, see *In Tim.* III 80, 31-83, 17: the sun, because of his special light 'leads the souls through its pure light and imbues them with a pure elevating power (ἄχραντον δύναμιν ἀναγωγόν).'

and *In RP.* I 276, 23-281, 7.

[67] Take e.g. the hymns to members of the triad of the elevating gods of the hyper-encosmic triad on which see chapter III § 5.

Tr. 35-38: *...and always purify me of every fault; / receive my tearful supplication, pull me out of baneful / defilement and keep me far from the punishing deities / while mollifying the swift eye of Justice that sees all.*

vss. 35-8 κέκλυθι καί με κάθηρον ἁμαρτάδος αἰὲν ἁπάσης·
δέχνυσο δ' ἱκεσίην πολυδάκρυον, ἐκ δέ με λυγρῶν
ῥύεο κηλίδων, Ποινῶν δ' ἀπάνευθε φυλάσσοις
πρηΰνων θοὸν ὄμμα Δίκης, ἣ πάντα δέδορκεν.

The fear of (the divine beings that administer) punishment (Ποιναί) is a recurrent theme in Proclus' hymns, see especially *H.* IV 10-12 and *H.* VII 40-3. Note especially the pathetic element in the descriptions, like ἱκεσίην πολυδάκρυον *ad loc.* This at least suggests that these are expressions of genuinely felt sentiments, not unlike the fear of hell and damnation that besieged medieval philosophers. It is here that we touch upon the ultimate goal of the Neoplatonic enterprise: the salvation of the soul from the cycle of rebirth inflicted upon it as a punishment for not living in accordance with *nous* but in accordance with the body instead.

Proclus' theory of divine justice and punishment takes much of its inspiration from Plato *Ti.* 41d4-42e8. The Demiurge reveals the laws of Fate (*Ti.* 412f. νόμους τοὺς εἱμαρμένους) to the souls at the moment of their first descent into the realm of matter. The incarnated soul is exposed to the influences of the body, notably the violent impressions of sensation, desire, and, thirdly, fear, anger and suchlike affections. To live in accordance with justice (δίκη) is to master these influences of the body, whereas the soul that is dominated by them leads a life contrary to justice. The just soul will be awarded a blessed existence and return to its native star, for which see *H.* III 6-7 with commentary, whereas the unjust soul will be subjected to a series of rebirths, cf. *H.* IV 12 ποινή τις κρυόεσσα βίου δεσμοῖσι πεδήσῃ (sc. my soul); *H.* VII 37-42.

For Proclus' discussion of these laws of Fate, see *In Tim.* III 271, 28-303, 32. He stresses that there is but one way of salvation for the soul out of the circle of generation: running up back to the noeric form of soul, i.e. living in accordance with Nous, while fleeing everything that has become attached to us because of generation (*In Tim.* III 296, 7-298, 2). The philosophical life may help to free one of the body, but 'the greatest contribution in my view is made by the telestic life, which takes away through the divine fire all defilement caused by

generation, as the oracles teach' (*In Tim.* III 300 16-19 τὸ δὲ μέγιστον κατά γε τὴν ἐμὴν δόξαν ἡ τελεστικὴ συμβάλλεται, διὰ τοῦ θείου πυρὸς ἀφανίζουσα τὰς ἐκ τῆς γενέσεως ἁπάσας κηλῖδας, ὡς τὰ λόγια). Here we touch on the special role assigned to Helios in the theurgical ceremonies of the elevation of the soul (see commentary to vs. 34), for the 'divine fire' is nothing else than the noeric, elevating, fire of Helios.[68] Note that the word designating the defilement caused by the life in the body (κηλῖδας) returns in vs. 37. The term κηλίς is one habitually used in the Platonic tradition to designate all that is material, see Lewy 1978²: 260 n.7 for examples. For the same idea, see Julian *Or.* XI [IV] (*To King Helios*) c. 10, 136 a-b: Helios frees the souls from the world of becoming and does not tie them again to a body in order to punish them but elevates them to the intelligible world.[69] Julian ends his hymn on King Helios with a prayer that after this life he may forever stay with Helios (instead of having to enter into another body) or, if he is asking too much, that he may dwell with him for the longest possible time (*o.c.* 44, 158bc).

Dike (Δίκη) is for Proclus cosmic justice which guarantees the divine law in all its aspects throughout the cosmos. This includes punishment of the souls who forget the laws of Fate and preferred a worse life over a better, i.e. chose to let their passions rule them instead of mastering them (*In Tim.* III 290, 2-10). One cannot escape Justice for it has an eye that sees all (θοὸν ὄμμα Δίκης, ἣ πάντα δέδορκεν). The all-seeing eye of Justice is a recurrent theme in Greek literature, at least from Sophocles onwards, see the commentary by Pearson 1917 (vol. I p. 11f.) to Fr. 12 for parallels to which may be added *Orphic Hymn* 62 (*to Dike*), 1: Ὄμμα Δίκης μέλπω πανδερκέος, ἀγλαομόρφου, cf. *Orphic Hymn* 69 (to the Erinyes), 15. Given the fact that Justice sees whatever fault we commit, we cannot hope to escape punishment, unless we are cleansed by Helios of our sins who in this way mollifies (πρηΰνων) Justice. For the idea that an avenging deity sees all the faults we commit from whom we may only be saved by divine intervention, see also *H.* VII 16-7 with commentary.

For αἰὲν, see commentary to vs. 39 below.

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[68] For the interpretation of this fire as that of the sun, see Lewy 1978²: 198-99.

[69] (Helios) ὃς ἀπολύει παντελῶς τῆς γενέσεως τὰς ψυχάς, οὐχὶ δὲ λυθείσας αὐτὰς σώμασιν ἑτέροις προσηλοῖ κολάζων καὶ πραττόμενος δίκας, ἀλλὰ πορεύων ἄνω καὶ ἀνατείνων τὰς ψυχὰς ἐπὶ τὸν νοητὸν κόσμον.

Tr. 39-41: *May you always through your evil-averting help / give holy light rich with blessings to my soul, / once you have scattered the man-destroying poisonous mist, / …*

vss. 39-41 αἰεὶ δ' ὑμετέραισιν ἀλεξικάκοισιν ἀρωγαῖς
ψυχῇ μὲν φάος ἁγνὸν ἐμῇ πολύολβον ὀπάζοις
ἀχλὺν ἀποσκεδάσας ὀλεσίμβροτον, ἰολόχευτον

As explained in the commentary on the foregoing verses, the soul can only escape the evil of rebirths if it lives in accordance with Nous (see chapter III § 4.1 for the problems involved in reaching Nous and the fact that we need the leader-gods to help us). Hence Helios' assistance in this matter is called here 'evil-averting' (ἀλεξικάκοισιν ἀρωγαῖς), i.e. averting the evil of rebirth prepared for us by the punishing daemons (vs. 29 κακὰ πορσύνοντες). Cf. commentary to vs. 21 for the adjective ἀλεξίκακος.

This assistance consists in illumination (φάος ἁγνόν) which disperses the mist (ἀχλύς) that obstructs the vision of the soul. It is an allusion to Homer *Il.* 5 121-32: Athena promises Diomedes to take away the mist (ἀχλύς) from his eyes so that from now on he is capable of distinguishing gods from mortal men on the battlefield. In Neoplatonic interpretations from Plotinus V 9 [5] 1, 16-21 onwards, the mist represents the effects of the body on the descended soul, notably the fact that it can no longer contemplate the intelligible realities.[70] For Proclus, the dispersion of this mist means that the gods kindle a noeric light (τὸ νοερὸν φῶς) in the soul. The soul is thus capable again of contemplating the Forms and living in accordance with Nous, see *In RP.* I 18, 21-19, 23.[71] The reference to the *Iliad* is more than just mere intertextuality, it functions as a theurgical *symbolon,* see chapter V § 3.3.3. For other allegorical interpretations of this passage, see Buffière 1956: 284.

The opposition between the noeric light and the material mist is reinforced by the adjectives: the light is called 'holy' (ἁγνός), for it is a light originating from the gods and 'rich in blessings' (πολύολβος), because it elevates the souls to the blessed existence of the gods (cf. vs. 33 ὄλβιε δαῖμον). The mist, on the other hand, is described with

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[70] As Proclus' pupil Ammonius puts it: '(the souls) descend at birth and are bound up with the body, and filled up with its fog (ἀχλύς), their sight becomes dim and they are not able to know things it is in their nature to know' (Ammonius *In Cat.* 15, 5-8, trans. S. Marc Cohen and G.B. Matthews).

[71] Cf. also chapter VI § 3.3.6.

two horrifying adjectives 'man-destroying, born of venom' (ὀλεσίμβροτος, ἰολόχευτος). The fact that the latter are most unusual, poetic, words puts extra emphasis on the danger of this mist: it may blind us completely, make us forget about the intelligible world and thus force us to live under the yoke of the material realm (cf. vss. 30-2).

Helios should (αἰεί) always help. Words like αἰεί or their equivalents are often added to requests in hymns, a custom followed by Proclus see *H.* I 35; III 14, 17; IV 9. It extends the god's goodwill into the indefinite future.[72]

Tr. 42: *...and (give) to my body fitness and gift-bestowing health;*

vs. 42 σώματι δ' ἀρτεμίην τε καὶ ἀγλαόδωρον ὑγείην
The adjective ἀγλαόδωρος is usually understood as 'being a splendid gift': Meunier 1935: 69 le magnifique don d'une santé parfaite; Giordano 1957: 25 il magnifico dono d'una perfetta salute; Saffrey 1984ª: 86 une santé parfaite et brilliante, cf. Saffrey 1994: 25 une santé parfaite et resplendissante. At the eleven other occurrences of adjective, however, it means 'bestowing splendid gifts' (mostly as an epithet to Demeter) as indeed L.-S.-J. and TLG have it, cf. vs. 21 μειλιχόδωρος 'bestowing pleasant gifts'. There is no reason to understand it differently here: according to Plato *R.* 357c health is an example of the things we welcome both for their own sake as well as for their consequences.

Prayers for health (ὑγεῖα) are a common element in hymns, see Keyßner 1932: 146-147 for numerous examples and a discussion. Proclus too was convinced that health was a gift from the gods that could be obtained by hymns and rituals. We find prayers for health in three of the seven hymns, see also *H.* VI 5-6 and VII 43-6. According to Marinus *Vita Procli* § 17, whenever Proclus learnt that someone he knew had fallen ill, he first beseeched the gods on behalf of the patient by means of rites and hymns (πρῶτον μὲν τοὺς θεοὺς λιπαρῶς ἱκέτευειν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἔργοις τε καὶ ὕμνοις). Only after he had done so, would he call for doctors. Marinus *Vita Procli* § 29 mentions one case in which Proclus' prayer to Asclepius brought about a miraculous cure of a girl called Asclepigeneia. The latter had fallen seriously ill and doctors could not do anything for her. Proclus, together with the

[72] Race 1982: 13f. who cites as examples Aristonous' Paian to Apollo (Powell 164) 41-8, an anonymous Paean to Asclepius (*PMG* 934) 19-24, and Pindar *Ol.* 13, 24-7.

philosopher Pericles from Lydia, went to the Asklepeion and prayed for the girl in the ancient fashion (εὐχομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀρχαιότερον τρόπον) which caused a sudden spectacular improvement in the condition of the girl. During his final illness, Proclus made his students sing hymns to ward of the terrible pains he was suffering to the effect he obtained complete serenity (*Vita Procli* § 20 λεγομένων τῶν ὕμνων, πᾶσα εἰρήνη τῶν παθῶν ἐγίγνετο καὶ ἀταραξία).[73]

Tr. 43-44: *bring me to glory, that in accord with the traditions of my forefathers / I may cultivate the gifts of the Muses with pretty locks.*

vss. 43-4 εὐκλείης τ' ἐπίβησον ἐμέ, προγόνων τ' ἐνὶ θεσμοῖς
Μουσάων ἐρασιπλοκάμων δώροισι μελοίμην.

Helios the god of harmony (and therefore the cause of Phoibos, the god of music (vss. 18-20) and the leader of the Muses) is now invoked to grant Proclus fame (εὐκλείης τ' ἐπίβησον, a Homeric expression, see e.g. *Il.* 8, 285) as a servant of the Muses. This prayer is comparable to that at the end of *H.* III (to the Muses) vss. 16-7.

We have to understand the art of the Muses in a wide sense here. It does not just include poetry but also philosophy. The divinely inspired poets like Homer and Orpheus are in Proclus' opinion philosophers (chapter VI § 2.1). On the other hand, the true philosopher is the true musician (Plato *Phd.* 61a3, cf. Proclus *In RP.* I 57, 8-23). The Muses can inspire the philosopher and the poet with divine wisdom and thus make him famous. This divine inspiration of the philosopher by the Muses is the central theme in *H.* III and will be discussed at length in the commentary.

The forefathers in whose footsteps Proclus wishes to follow (προγόνων τ' ἐνὶ θεσμοῖς) are both the poets of old like Homer and the philosophers of the Platonic tradition. A προγόνος may be a founding father of a philosophical school, see L.-S.-J. *s.v.* προγόνος II. In the case of Proclus it reflects also the particular social organisation of the

[73] Proclus' attitude towards health differs importantly from Plotinus', who thinks of health as an indifferent matter to a philosopher. As I have argued in Van den Berg 1996 this different attitude reflects a difference in psychology. Plotinus argues that the human soul never ever completely descends and that the undescended part of the soul is thus immune to whatever may befall the body. Proclus, on the other hand, is convinced that the soul entirely descends. For him the body is as an annoying neighbour who impedes one's efforts to philosophize all the time. At best there are moments that it does not disturb us (Proclus *In Tim.* III 349, 26ff.).

Neoplatonic Academy: its principal members (like Plutarch, Syrianus, and Proclus) lived in a big house at the foot of the Acropolis like a family. Proclus refers to Syrianus as his father, and to Plutarchus as his προπάτωρ.[74] Proclus, then, asks of Helios that he may be a worthy member of the Platonic tradition.[75]

As for fame, Marinus *Vita Procli* § 32 informs us that in a dream a god appeared to Proclus. In the dramatic fashion of orators who pronounce panegyrics in theatres, he said (Marinus assures us that he literally quotes the words uttered by the divinity): Πρόκλος ὁ κόσμος τῆς πολιτείας (Proclus, the adornment of the community). It is perhaps telling that Marinus *Vita Procli* § 16 admits that Proclus was ambitious (φιλότιμος).

Tr. 45-46: *Give me, if you wish so, lord, unshakeable bliss / as a reward for lovely piety.*

vs. 45 ὄλβον δ' ἀστυφέλικτον ἀπ' εὐσεβίης ἐρατεινῆς
What does this 'unshakable happiness' (ὄλβον δ' ἀστυφέλικτον) consist in? Ὄλβος often refers to worldly happiness, wealth (Keyßner 1932: 140, cf. L.-S.-J.), as seems to be the case in *H.* VII 48. However ὄλβος in vs. 33 (ὄλβιε δαῖμον) and vs. 40 (φάος πολύολβον) refers to the divine bliss as opposed to the misery of human life in which we may participate through divine illumination. Proclus does not use the word outside the hymns, nor is it often used by other Platonists. Although it cannot be ruled out that Proclus simply prays for wealth, there are indications that point in the direction of the latter sense.

First, the fact that Proclus continues to pray for health , and subsequently for fame suggests a triad of prayers for the good for the soul, the good for the body, and the external good of worldly fame.[76] Furthermore, in *H.* VI 12 Proclus prays that Hecate and Zeus may blow him to the harbour of piety (ὅρμον ἐς εὐσεβίης), in our interpretation the paternal harbour, i.e. divine Nous. This harbour is

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[74] Already Cousin 1864^2: 1317 n. 12 made this point. See Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* I 1968: xiv, for a list of passages where Proclus refers to his teachers as (fore)fathers. To these the testimony of Marinus *VP* § 29 may be added.

[75] Cf. Wilamowitz 1907: 275 commenting on these verses: 'In den Satzungen der Väter will er studieren dürfen, angesehen werden, und das Glück auf Grund seiner Frömmigkeit soll unerschüttert bleiben. Das ist Proklos persönlich, der Professor, das Schulhaupt, der Bekenner der bedrohten väterlichen Religion. Das alles soll ihm der Gott gewähren und erhalten.'

[76] As J. Dillon kindly pointed out to me.

a reward for a pious life, cf. ἀπ' εὐσεβίης ἐρατεινῆς in the present verse. In *H.* VII 32 Proclus refers to the paternal harbour as the 'blessed harbour' (ὄλβιον ὅρμον). Therefore, the state of bliss that results from piety may well be the paternal harbour, cf. the specific use of ὄλβος to designate the happiness that befalls those who have seen the holy mysteries.[77] Moreover, the adjective ἀστυφέλικτος points in the same direction. It is a quality of the gods (see e.g. Proclus *In Tim.* II 45, 7, *Orphic Hymn* 12 (to Heracles) 13, Callimachus *Hymn* 4, 26) as opposed to this sublunary world in which everything is always subjected to change, including one's fortune. Once Helios has helped the soul to escape from the realm of matter to the divine world, it will be no longer subjected to the fickle Moirai who now determine its fate (vss. 48-50) but enjoy the stable happiness of the divine life.

Tr. 46-47: *You perfect all things / easily, for you have the power and infinite might.*

vss. 46-7 … δύνασαι δὲ τὰ πάντα τελέσσαι| ῥηιδίως·

1. *Textual concerns*

The reading of the archetype δύνασαι δὲ ἅπαντα τελέσσαι is generally considered as corrupt because of the unnecessary hiatus. Vogt 1957[b]: 367-370 lists the following suggestions:

1. δύνασαι γὰρ ἅπαντα τελέσσαι (Brunck), followed by many editions before Vogt but rejected by him as unsatisfactory from a palaeographical point of view and because of the sequence in vs. 47 κρατερὴν γὰρ ἔχεις.
2. δύνασαι δὲ τὰ πάντα τελέσσαι (Peppmüller), rejected by Vogt because a general formulation of the omnipotence of Helios would suit the context of an aretology better than a reference to the fulfilment of Proclus' concrete prayers.[78] I adopt this emendation, albeit in a different interpretation, for reasons explained below.
3. δύνασαι δὲ τελέσσαι ἅπαντα (Ludwich), rejected by Vogt, following Wilamowitz 1907: 275 as unsatisfactory for reasons of metre.

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[77] Keyßner 1932: 141f., Festugière 1967: 331 on 'felix-formulae' in the mysteries.

[78] Vogt 1957[b]: 367: 'Eine allgemeinere Formulierung aretalogischen Charakters paßt als Abschluß der Vv. 33 ff. vorgetragenen Bitten besser als ein konkreter Bezug auf das Erbetene, in dessen Erfüllung sich dann gleichsam die Macht des Gottes erschöpfen würde.'

4. δύνασαι δ' ἑὰ πάντα τελέσσαι (Wilamowitz 1907: 275), followed by Vogt in his edition, ἑὰ meaning 'good things'. It originates from the confusion of ἐύς with ἑός in late Greek as recorded by Hesychius, an anonymous commentator on Apollonius Dyscolus *Synt.* and the *Etymologicum Magnum*. Ingenious as this emendation may be, Vogt admits that it rests on the meagre evidence in support of this confusion.
5. δύνασαι δὴ ἅπαντα τελέσσαι Vogt tentatively offers this emendation, being well aware that it is implicates a violation of Hermann's zeugma, for which he cites Homeric parallels.

Vogt concludes that there is no solution that is satisfying in all respects and that it is impossible to find any.[79] Vogt's criticism of Peppmüller (2), though, is not valid. The verb τελέσσαι should not be understood here as 'to fulfil' but as 'to perfect', whereas τὰ πάντα should be taken as 'all things in general', not as 'all things just asked for'. It reflects a central issue in Proclus' discussion of Helios/Apollo in *Theol. Plat.* VI 12. There Proclus stresses the fact that Helios by means of his noeric light leads all things in the cosmos to their state of perfection by filling them with harmony and or elevating them, see especially *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 63, 14-5: τὰ δὲ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ πάντα παρ' αὐτοῦ (sc. Helios) καὶ τὴν τελειότητα καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν ὑποδεχόμαι. The definitite article does not necessarily imply a reference to the things just prayed for. Τὰ πάντα may just mean 'all things in general', see e.g. Proclus *Theol. Plat.* III 24 p. 86, 10f.: Ὀρθῶς οὖν καὶ ἡ ποίησις πανταχοῦ τὰ πάντα δύνασθαί φησι τοὺς θεούς.[80] The fact that Helios perfects all things through his noeric, harmonious light has been celebrated in great detail in the first half of the hymn and this phrase summarises it. Interpreted thus, the emendation fits the context well. Moreover it yields a metrically impeccable verse, whereas the construction does not depend on shallow evidence as the solution preferred by Vogt does.

2. *The commonplaces of the omnipotence and the easy life of the gods*

Two related common-places have been connected here: that the omnipotent gods can do all things (δύνασαι δὲ τὰ πάντα τελέσσαι) and the fact that they can do all things easily (ῥηιδίως). The

[79] Vogt 1957^{b}: 370: 'Wir stehen am Ende. Eine in jeder Hinsicht befriedigende Lösung hat sich nicht ergeben, wird sich auch nicht finden lassen.'

[80] For the use of τὰ πάντα as 'all things', see e.g. Proclus *El.* § 14, p. 16, 21; § 113, p. 100, 11f.; § 115, p. 102, 32f.

omnipotence of the gods is a commonplace from Homer onwards, see especially *Od.* 10, 306: θεοὶ δέ τε πάντα δύνανται, the verse referred to by Proclus in *Theol. Plat.* III 24, p. 86, 10f. (quoted above), quoted again in *In RP.* I p. 167, 13-4. The verse recurs in other Neoplatonic authors, see Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* III 1978: 144 additional n. 2 to p. 86 for numerous examples.

The theme of the easy life of the gods too can be traced back to Homer, e.g. *Il.* 6, 138; 16, 690; 17, 178, and Hesiod, see especially *Er.* 5-7 with the commentary by West 1978: 139. The theme is also found in Neoplatonic authors, see e.g. Plotinus V 8 [31] 4, 1, Proclus *In Tim.* I 126, 30, *In Alc.* 127, 16f., *In Parm.* I 667, 14, *In Crat.* § 143, p. 81, 14-5, Marinus *Vita Procli* § 29 (Asclepius, invoked by Proclus, cured an ill girl easily, 'for he is a god'), see Segonds *In Alc.* vol. I 1985: 198 additional n. 6 to p. 105 for more parallels.

vs. 47 κρατερὴν γὰρ ἔχεις καὶ ἀπείριτον ἀλκήν
This verse recalls a possibly Chaldaean[81] distich quoted by Didymus *De Trinitate* III, 28 *P.G.* 39, 945d: Κάρτος ἀμετρήτοιο Θεοῦ καὶ ἀπείριτος ἀλκὴ | Πάντων μὲν κρατέει, πάντεσσι δὲ μοῦνος ἀνάσσει. Note that the second verse resembles vs. 17. For a discussion of this distych, see Lewy 1978²: 86 n. 74.

Tr. 48-50: *And if some ill comes my way through the threads moved by the stars / from the spindles of destiny that revolve in helices, / ward it off yourself with your mighty radiance.*

vss. 48-50 εἰ δέ τι μοιριδίοισιν, ἑλιξοπόροισιν ἀτράκτοις,
ἀστεροδινήτοις ὑπὸ νήμασιν οὐλοὸν ἄμμιν
ἔρχεται, αὐτὸς ἔρυκε τεῇ μεγάλῃ τόδε ῥιπῇ.

In vss. 15-7 Proclus praised Helios as the one who holds power over the Moirai. Here he asks Helios to use this power for his own protection against whatever harm (τι οὐλοόν) may come from them. As explained, the spindle (μοιριδίοισιν ἀτράκτοις) of the Moirai by means of which they spin the threads of fate consists of the heavenly bodies (ἀστεροδινήτοις). Helios, as the king of the universe, controls them by means of his noeric light (μεγάλῃ ῥιπῇ, see below) and may thus suppress whatever evil the Moirai have in store for him.

81 Its Chaldaean origin is disputed, see Majercik 1989: 218. The fact that Proclus uses it in his hymn seems to me to be an argument in favour of its Chaldaean origin.

ἑλιξοπόροισιν

For Proclus, taking his inspiration from Plato *Ti.* 39b6, the helix is the intermediary movement of the planets between the circular movement of the stars and the linear movement of generation (*In Tim.* III 78, 29-80, 22 esp. p. 80, 7-12). He thus rejects the accounts current in Antiquity for the observed irregularities in the movements of the planets (i.e. the fact that they do not move in exact circles) like the system of counter-acting spheres of Eudoxus and Aristotle and that of epicycles. For a discussion of Proclus' theory of the helical movement of the planets, see Siorvanes 1996: 293-299 and Miller 1986: 449-465.

μεγάλῃ ῥιπῇ

Ῥιπή is the movement or force with which something is thrown (L.-S.-J.), in this case the solar beams. There are two possible ways to understand this expression here, both equally plausible. The first possibility is that we imagine Helios as shooting his solar rays as arrows on whatever evil threatens Proclus, see e.g. Saffrey 1984[a]: 86 and 1994: 25 'le jet puissant (de tes flèches-rayons).' This image is all the more likely when, as Saffrey 1984[a]: 80-83 observes, Proclus sometimes identifies Helios with Apollo, the divine archer. Macrobius *Sat.* I 17, 60 indeed offers such an interpretation of the arrows of Apollo: 'the arrows refer to nothing else than the emission of rays (*radiorum iactus*).' A citation from a poem by Timotheus of Miletus (446-356 BCE) a few pages earlier (Macrobius *Sat.* I 17 20 = Fr. 11 Diehl) shows that he was not the first to do so.

However, in this hymn Helios and Apollo are neatly distinguished (vss. 18-9), while Helios' weapon is a whip (vs. 27). It is therefore possible that Proclus did not have the image of archery in mind when he composed these verses. Ῥιπή may just indicate the radiance of heavenly bodies like stars without any connotation of throwing projectiles, see e.g. Sophocles *El.* 105f. ἄστρων ῥιπάς: 'the *quivering* rays of starlight' (note Jebb).

II. (ΕΙΣ ΑΦΡΟΔΙΤΗΝ)

Introduction

Two of Proclus' seven hymns are dedicated to Aphrodite. He had been preceded by others like the composers of the *Homeric Hymns* 5 (referred to in this hymn, see commentary to vss. 9 and 13), 6 and 10, the poet(s) of the *Orphic Hymns* 55 and 58 (to Eros), and the famous Sappho. Together these hymns testify to the lasting ardent devotion for the goddess of Love who throughout Antiquity was worshipped by the common man and woman and intellectuals alike. As is the case with the hymn to Helios, Proclus takes much of his inspiration from this tradition.

According to Hesiod *Th.* 188ff., Aphrodite was born from the foam that was caused when Kronos threw the genitals of the castrated Ouranos into the sea. Another tradition holds that she was the child of Zeus and Dione. Plato *Symp.* mentions both traditions and interprets them in a philosophical way. His treatment of the myth was influential. It not only sparked off interpretations in the same vein by other philosophers (notably Plotinus *Enn.* III 5 [50]), but seems also to some degree to have influenced Greek cult.[1] For Proclus' reception of these stories, see my commentary to *H.* II 1 and *H.* V 6.

Greek religion associates Aphrodite with three domains: love, the state, and the sea.[2] As the goddess of love she unites individuals in various forms of union, be it a marriage or an extra-marital relationship which may even be adulterous. This is already the case in Homer: Zeus assigns the *erga* of marriage to Aphrodite (*Il.* 5, 429). This does not prevent her, however, from assisting Helen in her adulterous relation with Paris (*Il.* 3, 383-388), nor from having an affair with Ares (*Od.* 8, 266-269), although she is married to Hephaistos (cf. *H.* V 5). The persons united by Aphrodite can be of opposite sexes, but also of the same, as Sappho's prayer to Aphrodite (Fr. 1 ed. Voigt) illustrates.[3] These unions aim at sexual pleasure,[4] which, in

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[1] On this topic, see Pirenne-Delforge 1988.

[2] For the cult of Aphrodite, see the voluminous study by Pirenne-Delforge 1994 and her article in *Der Neue Pauly* 838-843, F. Graf *DDD* 117-125, and Burkert 1985: 152-156.

[3] For Aphrodite and homosexual relations, see further Pirenne-Delforge 1994:

the case of couples of opposite sexes, may result in pregnancy. Since legitimate offspring was the *raison d'être* of ancient marriage, this was an important aspect of the cult of Aphrodite. In Athens, for example, the legendary king Aegeus, who had remained childless because he had caused the anger of the goddess, was said to have introduced the cult of Aphrodite Ourania in order to reconcile himself with her. The sanctuary was situated at the north-west of the Agora, close to Proclus' house. The building was renovated in the early fifth century CE, though it is uncertain whether it was still used as a temple at that time.[5] Even if the building was not in use as a temple anymore, Proclus' hymns (*H.* II 10-12, V 9-10) still celebrate Aphrodite as the patron of procreation. For other instances of the worship of Aphrodite under this aspect, see Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 426-428.

Aphrodite not only united individuals, but also whole communities. From the end of the classical period onwards, she is worshipped as the deity who establishes concord and harmony in a community. The statue erected by the Lycian leaders mentioned in *H.* V 3-4 is here interpreted to commemorate this function of Aphrodite, see further commentary below.

Finally Aphrodite is associated with the sea, as is to be expected of a goddess born from its foam. She assists sailors and fishermen. If we leave the maritime metaphor in *H.* V 11 out of consideration, this function does not occur in Proclus' hymns.

Text

Ὑμνέομεν σειρὴν πολυώνυμον Ἀφρογενείης
καὶ πηγὴν μεγάλην βασιλήιον, ἧς ἄπο πάντες
ἀθάνατοι πτερόεντες ἀνεβλάστησαν Ἔρωτες,
ὧν οἱ μὲν νοεροῖσιν ὀιστεύουσι βελέμνοις
ψυχάς, ὄφρα πόθων ἀναγώγια κέντρα λαβοῦσαι
μητέρος ἰσχανόωσιν ἰδεῖν πυριφεγγέας αὐλάς·
οἱ δὲ πατρὸς βουλῇσιν ἀλεξικάκοις τε προνοίαις
ἱέμενοι γενεῇσιν ἀπείρονα κόσμον ἀέξειν
ψυχαῖς ἵμερον ὦρσαν ἐπιχθονίου βιότοιο.

430-432.

[4] For Aphrodite as the deity of sexual pleasure, see Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 419-433.

[5] For this sanctuary and its cult, see Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 15-21.

ἄλλοι δὲ γαμίων ὀάρων πολυειδέας οἴμους
αἰὲν ἐποπτεύουσιν, ὅπως θνητῆς ἀπὸ φύτλης
ἀθάνατον τεύξωσι δυηπαθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν·
πᾶσιν δ’ ἔργα μέμηλεν ἐρωτοτόκου Κυθερείης.

ἀλλά, θεά, πάντῃ γὰρ ἔχεις ἀριήκοον οὖας,
εἴτε περισφίγγεις μέγαν οὐρανόν, ἔνθα σέ φασι
ψυχὴν ἀενάοιο πέλειν κόσμοιο θεείην,
εἴτε καὶ ἑπτὰ κύκλων ὑπὲρ ἄντυγας αἰθέρι ναίεις
σειραῖς ὑμετέραις δυνάμεις προχέουσ’ ἀδαμάστους,
κέκλυθι, καὶ πολύμοχθον ἐμὴν βιότοιο πορείην
ἰθύνοις σέο, πότνα, δικαιοτάτοισι βελέμνοις
οὐχ ὁσίων παύουσα πόθων κρυόεσσαν ἐρωήν .

TRANSLATION

We hymn the many-named series of Aphrogeneia
and the great royal source, from which all
immortal winged Erotes have sprung up, of whom
some shoot with noeric arrows at souls, in order that,
having taken the upward-leading goads of desires,
these long after seeing the fiery courts of their mother.
Some, because of the evil-averting wishes and providential acts
of the Father, wishing to increase the infinite universe with birth,
aroused in the souls a yearning for the earthly existence.
Others again always supervise the multifarious
courses of the wedding songs, so as to produce an
immortal race of much-suffering men from mortal stock;
and all care for the works of the love-producing Kythereia.

But, goddess, for you have a far-hearing ear everywhere,
whether you envelop the great heaven all around,
where, as they say, you are the divine soul of the everlasting cosmos,
or dwell in the aether above the rims of the seven orbits
while pouring unyielding powers forward into your series,
listen, and may you steer the toilsome course of my life,
mistress, with your most righteous arrows,
while putting an end to the chilly impulse of unholy desires.

Structure

This hymn can be divided into three main parts: I. the opening verses, indicating that the hymn is in honour of Aphrodite and her series (vss. 1-3); II. an aretology dealing with the Erotes (i.e. manifestations of Aphrodite's activities in this world) (vss. 4-13); III. renewed invocations of Aphrodite and a petition (vss. 14-21).

Section I is programmatic: the hymn will be about the series depending on Aphrodite, i.e. the Erotes, (vs. 1) and Aphrodite herself (vs. 2). It is indeed in this order that Proclus treats them.

Section II can be subdivided into three parts, all dealing with a different aspect of love. The three parts consist in three subordinate clauses depending on the Erotes mentioned in vs. 3. The beginning of each subordinate clause coincides with the beginning of a new verse. The first part (II.a) deals with *eros* as an anagogic force; the second part (II.b) deals with *eros* as a cosmic force; the third part (II.c) deals with *eros* as a procreative source. The parts II.a and II.b contrast with II.c: The former are about *eros* on the level of the human soul in its circular motion of ascent and descent whereas II.c has nothing to do with this specific Platonic idea of the migration of the soul from one level of reality to another and back again, but with the common idea of *eros* as the force behind physical procreation in the material realm. Proclus seems to indicate this opposition by introducing the Erotes of II.c with ἄλλοι δὲ whereas II.a and II.b are closely knit together by οἱ μὲν ... οἱ δὲ. Between II.a and II.b there is another opposition of ascent versus descent. Section II. closes with a summarizing verse (vs. 13).

Section III is separated from the preceding section by ἀλλά. It can be divided into two parts: III.a (vss. $14\text{-}19^{a}$) is an invocation of Aphrodite, III.b (vss. $19^{b}\text{-}21$) is the petition proper. Section III is about the importance of Aphrodite for the suppliant personally, as opposed to sections I and II, which deal with the importance of Aphrodite and her Erotes in general. This is reflected by the fact that in I/II Proclus refers to Aphrodite and the Erotes in the third person, whereas he does so in III in the second person. Moreover, he refers to himself in the first person singular as opposed to the first plural in vs. 1 (ὑμνέομεν).

Commentary

Tr. 1-3: *We hymn the series with the many names of Aphrogeneia / and the great royal source, from which all / immortal winged Erotes have sprung up, …*

vs. 1 Ὑμνέομεν

Hymns often begin with expressions like ὑμνέομεν: Callimachus *H.* 3, 1f.: Ἄρτεμιν (οὐ γὰρ ἐλαφρὸν ἀειδόντεσσι λαθέσθαι) | ὑμνέομεν; Theocritus *Id.* 22, 1: Ὑμνέομεν Λήδας τε καὶ αἰγιόχου Διὸς υἱώ; Proclus *H.* III 1; V 1. Comparable expressions are ἀείδω (e.g. *Hom. H.* 18, 1); ἄρχομ' ἀείδειν (e.g. *Hom. H.* 2, 1; 11, 1; 16, 1); ᾄσομαι (e.g. *Hom. H.* 6, 2).

vs. 1 σειρὴν πολυώνυμον

For the term σειρά, see commentary to *H.* I 18. The series of Aphrodite consists of the Erotes (vs. 3).

The adjective πολυώνυμος occurs frequently in connection with gods. It reflects the Greek habit of invoking a deity not only by its 'proper' name but also by, e.g., alternative cult-names, patro- or metronymica, names of 'minor gods' who have merged with the 'major' ones, names indicating the habitual residence of the god, names indicating function and epithets of which the original meaning and provenance is unclear and which have 'stuck' to the god as a result of their epic formularity (Bremer 1981: 194-5). A reference to the many names of a god was supposed to please him, for it underscores his importance. The adjective πολυώνυμος therefore often appears in Greek hymns (see Keyßner 1932: 47 for occurrences and a discussion).

Erler (1987: 201, 205) assumes that the adjective πολυώνυμος is intended to replace the customary series of many different epithets that often occur in hymns like in the case of *Orphic Hymn* 55 (to Aphrodite) 1-3. Proclus, according to Erler, is afraid that these incite the imagination of the audience, and thus divert their attention from the intelligible realm towards the material. Admittedly, Proclus is not interested in offering a titillating portrait of Aphrodite. However, in the light of the first part of *H.* VII (many references to imaginative stories, including Hephaistos' attempt to rape Athena vss. 9-10), this is a less likely interpretation of πολυώνυμος. Rather, the adjective indicates the diversity of kinds of love in the train of Aphrodite, as

the hymn continues to illustrate (vss. 4-12 list three types of Erotes). Cf. the outline of the ἐρωτικὴ σειρά as offered by Proclus *In Alc.* 31, 9-22: this series finally spreads itself throughout 'our cosmos where it is divided into many sorts of love' (περὶ τὸν κόσμον πολυειδῶς μεριζομένην).

vs. 1 Ἀφρογενείης
Aphrodite is often called ἀφρογένεια (foam-born) in Greek literature, see e.g. *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 240, 3; 7, 218, 11; 9, 324, 1; Nonnus *D.* 6, 353; 20, 231; 31, 269. It is first attested in Hesiod *Th.* 196 (…τὴν δ' Ἀφροδίτην | ἀφρογενέα τε θεὰν καὶ εὐστέφανον Κυθέρειαν),[6] a verse that influenced Proclus, see my commentary on vs. 13 Κυθερείης. He also explains its origin: Aphrodite was born from the foam generated when Kronos cast the genitals of the castrated Ouranos into the sea (*Th.* 187-200).

Commenting on Plato *Crat.* 406c, Proclus discusses Hesiod's tale (*In Crat.* § 183 pp. 109, 22-111, 20, cf. Erler 1987: 207-211). He first seeks to harmonize the birth from foam with a different account of the birth of Aphrodite. According to the latter version Aphrodite was the child of Zeus and Dione. Plato *Smp.* 180c1ff. mentions both traditions (see commentary to *H.* V 6 Οὐρανίης Ἀφροδίτης). Proclus states that the latter Aphrodite too was born from foam. He cites an Orphic source (Fr. 183 ed. Kern) according to which Zeus had an ejaculation while pursuing Dione. His semen fell into sea and resulted in the birth of Aphrodite Aphrogenês (Ἀφροδίτην ἀφρογενῆ).[7] Once Proclus has established that both Aphrodites are born from foam, he explains the meaning of it: the sea is the material cosmos (cf. commentary to *H.* I 30-31), the foam is 'the most pure element, full of fertile light and power floating on all life,' in other words it refers to the special position that Love holds in this world as the connection between the material and intelligible realm.

vs. 2 πηγὴν μεγάλην βασιλήιον
Aphrodite is the source (πηγή), i.e. the cause of the series of the Erotes who depend on her. The adjective 'great' (μέγας) is used in

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[6] We should note, however, that this verse is considered dubious by Heyne, Wolf and West, see ed. West 1966: 233.

[7] For this interpretation of Fr. 183 ed. Kern, see West 1983: 121. He notes that the story is comparable to that of Hephaistos who ejaculated while pursuing Athena, for which see commentary to *H.* VII 9-10.

connection to πηγή only here in Proclus. Perhaps it is a reference to Plato *Smp.* 202d13 where Eros is called a 'great daemon' (δαίμονα μέγαν), i.e. a powerful, important one. Proclus explains that Eros is a great daemon because he is the mean between everything that makes the pivotal movement of *epistrophe*[8] and the object of this movement, divine Beauty (*In Alc.* 30, 16ff. text cited at commentary to vss. 4-6; cf. *In Alc.* 64, 9-10). The source of the expression is said to be Orphic (*In Alc.* 67, 1-4 = Fr. 168 ed. Kern, see also *In Tim.* II 112, 12).

According to Plotinus *Enn.* III 5 [50] 8, 13 the epithet βασιλικός refers to a cause (αἴτιον), a meaningful interpretation in the present context.

vs. 3 ἀθάνατοι πτερόεντες ἀνεβλάστησαν Ἔρωτες
Eros is depicted with wings from the sixth century BCE onwards, but not necessarily always so.[9] A running winged Eros adorns an oil lamp dated to the fifth century CE and found in what was perhaps the house of Proclus.[10] Cf. e.g. *Orphic Hymn* 58 (To Eros) 2: (Ἔρωτα) πτερόεντα.

Plato *Phdr.* 252b8-9 quotes two verses by the Homerids according to which the gods call Eros πτέρως, whereas the humans call him ποτηνός (both words mean 'winged'). Proclus *In Crat.* § 9, p. 3, 28ff. explains that the adjective πτέρως denotes Eros as unparticipated and divine, ποτηνός as participated in by humans. This interpretation of the adjective πτέρως, however, does not seem to play any role in the present hymn, because all three types of *eros* mentioned are participated in by humans.

Tr. 4-6: *...of whom / some shoot with noeric arrows at souls, in order that, / once they have taken the upward-leading goads of desires, / they long after seeing the fiery courts of their mother.*

vss. 4-6 ὧν οἱ μὲν νοεροῖσιν ὀιστεύουσι βελέμνοις
ψυχάς, ὄφρα πόθων ἀναγώγια κέντρα λαβοῦσαι
μητέρος ἰσχανόωσιν ἰδεῖν πυριφεγγέας αὐλάς·

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[8] On *epistrophe*, see chapter II § 3.2.

[9] On the representation of winged Erotes in Greek art, see A. Rumpf *s.v.* Eros (Eroten) II (in der Kunst), *RAC* v. 6 (1966) 313; *LIMC* III, 1 p. 581.

[10] For a description of this lamp, see Karivieri in Castrén 1994: 133 and fig. 32a for a photo. The lamp is not exactly a piece of art.

1. *The double movement of Love*

Diotima's speech in Plato's *Smp.* 210d ff. introduces a notion of philosophical *eros* that has been most influential in the history of Platonism. What precisely Platonic *eros* entails is a matter of scholarly debate, but it includes in any case a desire for the truly beautiful. In Proclus, we may be sure that love works in two directions: top down it inspires the inferior beings with love for divine Beauty; bottom up it makes, as a result the former movement, the inferior strive after superior beauty.[11] As such *eros* is a mediator between us and divine beauty. To quote just one passage from Proclus which brings this two-way direction of Proclean love out clearly:

> … so also the whole order of love is for all beings the cause of reversion to the divine beauty, on the one hand elevating (ἀνάγουσα) to, uniting with and establishing in it (sc. the divine beauty) all that is secondary, and on the other filling therefrom (sc. the divine beauty) what lies subsequent to itself (sc. the order of love) and radiating the communications of divine light that proceed from it. Doubtless for this reason the account in the *Symposium* called love a 'mighty daemon', as primarily displaying in itself this power of intermediacy, since there is a medium between everything that reverts and the cause of reversion and object of appetency to secondary beings (trans. O'Neill 1971[2]: 19, slightly adapted).[12]

[11] In scholarly literature, there has been a, I fear phoney, debate about the direction of *eros* in Proclus. It all started with Nygren's study of *eros* and *agape*, cited here in the French translation from 1951 (original edition in Swedish). Scholars like Armstrong 1961: 106 and Gersh 1973: 123-127, have laid the criticism at Nygren's door that he wrongly holds that Proclean love is a descending *eros* only. Some passages may indeed give this impression, but Nygren appears nevertheless to subscribe to the thesis defended by Armstrong and Gersh that in Proclus love descends as well as ascends. He concludes his chapter on Proclus: 'Celui-ci crée une relation entre ce qui est divin et ce qui est périssable, non plus dans un sens *unique*, comme chez Platon, à savoir de ce qui est inférieur, mais dans les *deux* senses (italics are mine, RMB): l'érôs est, au même titre, le canal qui nous apporte les dons divins et le véhicule grâce auquel nous pouvons accéder au monde supérieur' (Nygren 1951: 144f.). Beierwaltes 1979[2]: 306-313, in his excellent treatment of Proclean *eros*, does not join in the debate but clearly describes the circular motion of love: '[Eros] erweist sich als die vom Ursprung bewegte bewegende Kraft der Rückkehr in den göttlichen Ursprung von Schönheit, Wahrheit und Gutheit' (p.307). Subsequently, he focusses especially on the upward direction of *eros*.

[12] *In Alc.* 30, 16ff: οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἡ ἐρωτικὴ πᾶσα τάξις ἐπιστροφῆς ἐστὶν αἰτία τοῖς οὖσιν ἅπασι πρὸς τὸ θεῖον κάλλος, ἀνάγουσα μὲν τὰ δεύτερα πάντα πρὸς ἐκεῖνο καὶ συνάπτουσα αὐτῷ καὶ ἐνιδρύουσα, πληροῦσα δὲ ἀπ' ἐκείνου τὰ μεθ' ἑαυτὴν καὶ ἐπιλάμπουσα τὰς προϊούσας ἐκεῖθεν τοῦ θείου φωτὸς μεταδόσεις. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο δήπου καὶ ὁ ἐν τῷ Συμποσίῳ λόγος δαίμονα μέγαν ἐκάλει τὸν ἔρωτα τὴν τῆς μεσότητος ταύτης δύναμιν ἐν ἑαυτῷ πρώτως ἐπιδεικνύμενον, παντὸς τοῦ ἐπιστρεφομένου καὶ τοῦ τῆς ἐπιστροφῆς αἰτίου καὶ ὀρεκτοῦ τοῖς δευτέροις ὑπάρχοντος μέσον.

Vss. 4-6 contain this complete cycle of love: first love descends upon the souls from above: νοεροῖσιν ὀιστεύουσι βελέμνοις ψυχάς (the downward motion) with the intended result of an upward directed anagogic love in the souls (ὄφρα πόθων ἀναγώγια κέντρα λαβοῦσαι).

2. *Commentary on the details*

νοεροῖσιν ὀιστεύουσι βελέμνοις

The Erotes are traditionally armed with bow and arrow, e.g. *Orph. Hymn* 58 (To Eros) 2, Nonnus *D.* 10, 245ff.; 15, 324, cf. *LIMC* III, 1 p. 852. The arrows are said to be noeric (νοερός) to indicate that these Erotes do not cause desire for beautiful bodies but for divine Beauty.

πόθων ...κέντρα

A case of a possible reminiscence of Proclus in Musaeus (vs. 196): Λείανδρος δὲ πόθου βεβολημένος ὀξέι κέντρῳ. For κέντρον as the aching goads that urge a lover to find his beloved, cf. Plato *Phdr.* 251e4.

μητέρος

Aphrodite is presented as the mother of the Erotes in this hymn, cf. also vs. 13 ἐρωτοτόκου Κυθερείης. Although this is a well-established tradition in Antiquity — cf. e.g. *Orphic Hymn* 55 (To Eros) 8 μῆτερ Ἐρώτων — , it is not the only one. According to Hesiod *Th.* 120, Eros is one of the first gods together with Tartarus and Gaea. Plato alternatively puts Poros and Penia forward as the parents of Eros (*Smp.* 203b1ff.). As a rule, Proclus follows Plato's version, see e.g. *Theol. Plat.* I 28, p. 122, 5ff.; *In Parm.* IV 976, 21ff.; *In Tim.* III 171, 21-30; *In Crat.* § 119, p. 71, 10ff.).[13] He mentions Aphrodite nowhere else as the mother of the Erotes. When he does so in this case, it is probably prompted by the fact that this is a hymn to Aphrodite.

πυριφεγγέας αὐλάς

In Proclus, anagogic *eros* is supposed to lead towards divine Beauty,[14] one of the members of the triad of divine qualities of which the other

[13] According to Proclus' interpretation of the version of the birth of Eros in Plato's *Symposium*, the father, Poros, symbolizes the cause that is superior to its effect, whereas the mother, Penia, is the potency without limit and as such inferior to the product (*Theol. Plat.* I 28, 122, 5ff.). The product of this inferior potency and superior cause has a desire for its superior cause. It is thus that 'Eros joins the less complete to the more complete' (*In Parm.* IV 976, 23-4.).

[14] See discussion at chapter III § 5.

members are Goodness (τὸ ἀγαθόν), Wisdom (σοφία). It is therefore logical to assume that Aphrodite's fiery court coincides with divine Beauty. Proclus nowhere equates Aphrodite with divine Beauty, but there is some justification for this in the fact that Proclus considers divine Beauty as the cause of the whole erotic triad.[15] In this hymn the same function is attributed to Aphrodite as the source from which all forms of *eros* spring (vss. 2-3). Moreover, Damascius equates Aphrodite with divine Beauty in so many words.[16] Cf. Hermeias *In Phdr.* 90, 18ff.: Eros 'joins the soul to the gods and their inexpressible Beauty' (συνάψαι τὴν ψυχὴν τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ τῷ ἀφράστῳ αὐτῶν κάλλει).

For the image of a court of a deity in the parlance of the Chaldaean oracles in general, see my commentary on *H.* I 32 πατρὸς πολυφεγγέος αὐλῆς.

Tr. 7-9: *Some, because of the evil-averting wishes and providential acts / of the Father, wishing to increase the infinite universe with birth, / aroused in the souls a yearning for the earthly existence.*

vss. 7-9 οἱ δὲ πατρὸς βουλῇσιν ἀλεξικάκοις τε προνοίαις
ἱέμενοι γενεῇσιν ἀπείρονα κόσμον ἀέξειν
ψυχαῖς ἵμερον ὦρσαν ἐπιχθονίου βιότοιο.

1. *Introduction*

The function of these Erotes is the opposite of those in vss. 4-6. The latter kindle in the souls a love for the intelligible realm. The former, on the contrary, make the souls fall in love with the material cosmos so that they descend into it. Proclus touches here upon a central theme in Platonic psychology and cosmology: why do the souls change their blessed existence in the intelligible world for this vale of tears, and what is the role of the gods in the descent of the souls?

The Neoplatonic discussions take their point of departure from the speech of the Demiurge in Plato's *Timaeus.* He admonishes the younger gods not to leave the world unfinished (ἀτελής *Ti.* 41b8) but

15 *In Alc.* 31, 2f: ἡ τοίνυν ἐρωτικὴ πᾶσα σειρὰ τῆς τοῦ κάλλους αἰτίας προβεβλημένη.

16 Damascius *In Phlb.* 21, 1-5: Ὅτι οὐδεὶς τῶν παλαιῶν Ἀφροδίτην φησὶν εἶναι τὴν ἡδονήν· τίς δὲ ἡ αἰτία; ἢ ὅτι συναγωγὸς μὲν ἡ Ἀφροδίτη, τῇ δὲ συναγωγῇ ἑπόμενόν τι ἡ ἡδονή· καὶ ὅτι πολὺ τὸ αἶσχος τῆς ἡδονῆς, τῆς γε σωματικῆς, ἡ δὲ Ἀφροδίτη κάλλος ἐστίν, οὐ μόνον τὸ ἔνθεον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ τῆς φύσεως.

to create the three mortal species, including humanity, that are yet lacking. From this the Neoplatonists conclude that the descent of the soul into the material realm is necessary for the perfection of the world,[17] see e.g. Proclus *In Tim.* III 324, 15-24. As such it is a good thing and in accordance with the will of the Demiurge. However good though the descent of the souls may be from the cosmic perspective, it is a bad thing for the descended soul, because it goes from a more perfect to a less perfect mode of existence. The Neoplatonists seek to avoid the implication that god is to be blamed for this evil. It is the soul itself who is so attracted to the realm of matter that it chooses to descend towards an inferior mode of existence. This attraction is described in terms of love for the material world, see the discussion by Festugière 1953: 93-96.[18]

Proclus here appears to link the completion of the world to another topic of the speech by the Demiurge, that of the eternity of the world. Everything that has been composed can be dissolved. This includes the cosmos. However, the Demiurge will not allow this to happen (*Ti.* 41a-b). Therefore, the cosmos will have an infinite existence in time (vs. 8 ἀπείρονα κόσμον). Since over time souls ascend (vss. 4-5), other souls must descend to take their place in order that the cosmos remains a perfect whole. The descent of souls then is necessary to make an everlasting cosmos possible.

2. *Details*

πατρὸς βουλῆσιν ἀλεξικάκοις τε προνοίαις

The 'father' (πατήρ) is the Demiurge, 'the Father and Maker of this universe' (*Ti.* 28c3f.), not the begetter of the Erotes (so Meunier 1935: 89 'leur père' and Saffrey 1994: 29 'leur Père').[19] According to Plato, it is this will of Demiurge (*Ti.* 41b4 τῆς ἐμῆς βουλήσεως) that guarantees the eternal existence of the cosmos; hence it here said to avert the evil (ἀλεξίκακος), i.e. the evil of the destruction of the cosmos.

Proclus commenting on Plato *Ti.* 30a2 (βουληθεὶς γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἀγαθὰ μὲν πάντα) explains the relation between the will and the

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[17] On this theme see Festugière 1953: 73-77.

[18] I have been unable to find exact parallels in Proclus. According to *In Alc.* 32, 11ff. human souls descend because of love. In this case, however, it is the love of perfect souls for less perfect ones who need the assistance of the perfect ones.

[19] The identity of the father of Eros was notoriously unknown, cf. *Anth. Graeca* 5, 177 for a funny exploration of this theme.

providence of the Demiurge. The gods (especially the Henads) are characterized by the triad of Goodness, Will and Providence (ἡ ἀγαθότης, ἡ βούλησις, ἡ πρόνοια). The Demiurge shares these characteristics too in so far as he may be considered to be a god. He is good (ἡ ἀγαθότης), therefore he wants his creation to be good (ἡ βούλησις), hence he takes care that it is so (πρόνοια).[20]

The will of the Demiurge to preserve the cosmos makes it necessary that souls descend (see *Introduction* above). Therefore the Erotes who make the souls do so act in accordance with the will and the providence of the Demiurge.

ἀπείρονα κόσμον ἀέξειν

Plato's Demiurge granted the cosmos an unlimited (ἄπειρος) lifespan, see *Introduction* above, cf. Proclus' paraphrase of Plato *Ti.* 41a-b: ἄλυτον εἰς τὸν ἄπειρον χρόνον διὰ τὴν βούλησιν τοῦ πατρός (*In Tim.* II 54, 18-19). The adjective predicate ἄπειρος is proleptic: the lifespan of the universe is constantly extended so as to make it last for an unlimited period. For the use of proleptic predicate nouns, see Smyth 1956: 357 §1579.

ἵμερον ὦρσαν

Cf. *Homeric Hymn* (to Aphrodite) 5, 2 (Aphrodite) γλυκὺν ἵμερον ὦρσε.

Tr. 10-12: *Others again always supervise the multifarious / courses of the wedding songs, so as to produce an / immortal race of much-suffering men from mortal stock;*

vss. 10-11 ἄλλοι δὲ γαμίων ὀάρων πολυειδέας οἴμους | αἰὲν ἐποπτεύουσιν

The translators miss the point here by translating οἴμους as 'paths': Meunier 1935: 89f.: 'D'autres encore surveillent incessament les différents chemins des relations intimes du marriage'; Giordano 1957: 27: 'Altri ancora sui varî sentieri degli amplessi nuziali incessantemente vigilano'; Saffrey 1994: 29 'D'autres, enfin, veillent sans cesse sur les chemins très variés des unions qui fondent les marriages.' The word οἶμος can be translated as 'path' but also as the 'course' or the 'strain' of a song (L.-S.-J. *s.v.* οἶμος 1 and 4). The latter

[20] *In Tim.* I 370, 13-371, 8, esp. 371, 4-7.

translation is required here, as the addition γαμίων ὀάρων (wedding songs) indicates. The word for 'song' (ὀάρος) suits the context well, since ὀάρος is mainly used with the connotation of love song in later poets (L.-S.-J. *ad loc.*).

During a Greek wedding, songs were sung at different stages of the ceremony. Proclus refers here probably to the so-called *epithalamia*, songs (or speeches) given at the bridal chamber (*thalamos*). Depending on the taste of the composer, these songs contained references to the consummation of the marriage in different degrees of explicitness. The hope of offspring (cf. vss. 11-12) was one of the topics of such a song.[21]

That this tradition was still alive in Athens in late Antiquity is for example shown by the Athenian rhetor Himerius (310-390 CE). In the prooemium of his *epithalamium* in honour of the marriage of Severus, he reminds the audience how Sappho, because of her poetic genius, managed to win Aphrodite, the Charites, and the Erotes over to come to the bridal chamber (Himerius 9, 4, 41-2 ed. Colonna).

According to the same Himerius 9, 1, 3ff. ed. Colonna, composers of *epithalamia* enjoyed great liberty, even to the degree that he expected some of his readers to raise their eyebrows at his own attempts to treat the genre technically. This is a possible explanation why Proclus calls the strains of these songs 'multifarious' (πολυειδής), cf. *In Crat.* § 177, p. 103, 23: τὴν ποικιλίαν τῶν ἁρμονιῶν.

vss. 11-12: … ὅπως θνητῆς ἀπὸ φύτλης | ἀθάνατον τεύξωσι δυηπαθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν·

The idea that man may gain some sort of immortality by living on through one's posterity is famously expressed in Plato's treatment of *eros* in *Smp.* 207a5ff. For the oxymoron of mortals obtaining immortality, see especially *Smp.* 208b2ff. (ταύτῃ τῇ μηχανῇ, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἔφη, θνητὸν ἀθανασίας μετέχει, καὶ σῶμα καὶ τἆλλα πάντα). For the idea that this immortality is achieved especially by offspring from a marriage, see Plato *Lg.* 721b6f.: Γαμεῖν δὲ, …, διανοηθέντα ὡς ἔστιν ᾗ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος φύσει τινὶ μετείληφεν ἀθανασίας …. Given these Platonic passages, one wonders why Vogt only refers to the second century CE rhetor Aristides *Or.* 43, 21 and 42, 5.

21 On *epithalamia*, see *OCD* 1996: 548 *s.v.* epithalamium.

Tr. 13: *and all care for the works of the love-producing Kythereia.*

vs. 13 πᾶσιν δ’ ἔργα μέμηλεν ἐρωτοτόκου Κυθερείης.

This verse is an almost verbal borrowing from the Homeric hymn on Aphrodite (*Homeric Hymn* 5, 6: πᾶσιν δ’ ἔργα μέμηλεν ἐϋστεφάνου Κυθερείης). In the source-text ‘πᾶσιν’ refers to the gods, mankind and animals, who are all subjected to the powers of Aphrodite. In our hymn, it refers to the different groups of Erotes to whom have been assigned different tasks in the field of love. The verse marks the end of the first part of the hymn in which the Erotes held the place of honour. Note the parallelism between vss. 1-3 and vs. 13: Aphrodite is the cause (vss. 2-3; vs. 13 ἐρωτοτόκου) of all Erotes (vs. 2 πάντες, vs. 13 πᾶσιν); Aphrodite is called by epithets that refer to the story of her birth (vs. 1 ’Αφρογενείης; vs. 13 Κυθέρειαν, for which see below).

The epithet Κυθέρεια refers to the myth of the birth of Aphrodite. According to Hesiod’s *aition* for this epithet (Hes. *Th.* 192f.), Cythera was the island where Aphrodite came ashore after her miraculous birth from foam. On Cythera was one of the oldest and most famous of Aphrodite’s shrines in Greece.[22] The fact that the epithet Αφρογενεία occurs in the first verse and Κυθερεία in the last of the first part of the hymn point to the influence of Hes. *Th.* 196 (…τὴν δ’ ’Αφροδίτην | ἀφρογενέα τε θεὰν καὶ εὐστέφανον Κυθέρειαν, already cited above), which does not only contain the two epithets but also in the same order.

Tr. 14-19: *But, goddess, for you have a farhearing ear everywhere, / whether you envelop the great heaven all around, / where, as they say, you are the divine soul of the everlasting cosmos, / or dwell in the aether above the rims of the seven orbits / while pouring unyielding powers forward into your series, / listen …*

vs. 14f. πάντῃ γὰρ ἔχεις ἀριήκοον οὖας, | εἴτε … εἴτε

To pray to the divinity to listen wherever it may be, either in this place or that, is a standard phrase in Greek hymns, see *Orphic Hymn* 49 (to Hipta) 4-6 for a good parallel (κλῦθι μου …εἴτε…ἢ); for the many different places where Aphrodite may be, see *Orph. Hymn* 55 (to Aphrodite) 17-26. Whereas the composers of the Orphic hymns refer to geographical locations, Proclus rather refers to different

[22] For Aphrodite’s cult on Cythera, see commentary ed. West 1966: 222 *ad loc.*

hierarchical positions, in this case in the cosmos (vss. 15-6) or beyond this cosmos (vs. 17). See Proclus *In RP* I, 141, 21: Aphrodite is everywhere (πανταχοῦ δὲ τῆς ’Αφροδίτης οὔσης) i.e. at all levels of reality (cf. Festugière’s note *ad loc.*), cf. Plotinus *Enn.* III 5 [50] 4, 13-15.

Vss. 15-6 περισφίγγεις μέγαν οὐρανόν, ἔνθα σέ φασι
ψυχὴν ἀενάοιο πέλειν κόσμοιο θεείην,

1. *Introduction: Aphrodite as the World Soul*

In vss. 14-6 Aphrodite is equated with the World Soul (ψυχὴν ἀενάοιο κόσμοιο θεείην). This equation is not found in Proclus’ writings, cf. the insertion of ‘φασι’ (vs. 15) which seems to indicate a certain distancing from that view.

Plotinus is the notable upholder of this identification. In *Enn.* III 5 [50] 2 he assigns the role of World Soul to Aphrodite the child of Zeus and Dione, whereas the Aphrodite Ourania, i.e. the Aphrodite produced at the occasions of the castration of Ouranos, is the all-soul separated from this world.[23] It is a matter of debate whether Plotinus believes that Plato argues that Aphrodite is the World Soul. It is a fact, however, that Plato nowhere does so.[24] We note that there is no reference to the World Soul in Proclus’ interpretation of the myth of Aphrodite’s birth, for which see commentary to vs. 1 ’Αφρογενείης.
These verses resemble so closely *Homeric Hymn* 8 (to Ares) 6-8 that it seems likely that they inspired Proclus. For the resemblance, see West 1970: 301; for the fact that Proclus was probably inspired by these verses, see Gelzer 1987.

2. *Vss. 15-6: Commentary on the details*

περισφίγγεις

The use of the word περισφίγγειν to describe the soul encircling the cosmos is a borrowing from Plato *Ti.* 58a7. In Plato the circuit of the whole (περίοδος) is said to constrict (σφίγγει) all the four elements. It is problematic what exactly ‘σφίγγειν’ means in the latter passage. It

[23] This at least one way to interpret the difficult *Enn.* III 5 [50], see Hadot 1990: 46-61 for an extended discussion.

[24] The crucial passage is *Enn.* III 5 [50] 5, 11: ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ τοῦ κόσμου ἡ ’Αφροδίτη ἐστὶν αὐτῷ. Some believe αὐτῷ to refer to Plato, others to κόσμου. Wolters 1972: 56 comments: ‘This refers not to Plato (so Müller, Mackenna, Harder, Cilento, Armstrong), but to ὁ κόσμος (so Ficino, Meunier, Bréhier). Plotinus had already spoken of the world-soul as its Aphrodite above (3.30); Plato nowhere does so.’

can mean 'constrict' (compress) or simply 'embrace', depending on how one interprets the passage.[25] The prefix περι- is added because the Demiurge is said to have enveloped the cosmos in the World Soul (see discussion in Cornford 1937: 242-246.). In the same way Philo *Post.* 5 uses the word 'περισφίγγειν' when he describes the circle of the sky as enveloping all created things.[26] Note that the notion of 'compressing', 'binding' is absent from the Philonic passage.

ἀενάοιο κόσμοιο

For the eternal existence of the cosmos, see commentary to vss. 7-9. Proclus *In Tim.* I 453, 18-19 describes the potency of the world to exist infinitely with the adjectives ἀνέκλειπτος and ἀέναος.

Vss. 17-8 εἴτε καὶ ἑπτὰ κύκλων ὑπὲρ ἄντυγας αἰθέρι ναίεις
σειραῖς ὑμετέραις δυνάμεις προχέουσ' ἀδαμάστους

1. *Introduction: Aphrodite beyond the orbits of the planets*

Proclus' extant writings are of little help in throwing light on the position of Aphrodite beyond the orbits of the planets. The fact that she is beyond the orbits of the planets excludes in any case the possibility that she is the planet Venus. I tentatively suggest that this Aphrodite is superior to the previous one. There are two indications for this:

1. Aphrodite dwells in the aether. The aether is the traditional dwelling place of the gods. So traditional in fact, that the very formulation αἰθέρι ναίεις is a Homeric borrowing (*Il.* 2, 412: Ζεῦ … αἰθέρι ναίων; *Od.* 15, 523: Ζεὺς … αἰθέρι ναίων). In Proclus *H.* VII 12 it is the place where Zeus (the Demiurgic Nous) dwells, a deity superior to the World Soul. Moreover, Proclus considers Aphrodite as something so pure that it floats above the sea of the material cosmos (see commentary to vs. 1 'Αφρογενείης).
2. Since Proclus refers to Plotinus in vss. 15-6, we may recall that Plotinus distinguishes Aphrodite the World Soul from a divine soul that transcends the World Soul.[27]

[25] See discussion Cornford 1937: 242-246.

[26] πάντα γὰρ ὧν γένεσίς ἐστιν οὐρανοῦ κύκλος περισφίγξας ἐντὸς ἑαυτοῦ κατέχει (For all created things are enclosed and kept within itself by the circle of the sky, trans. Colson-Whitaker).

[27] For this interpretation, see again Hadot 1990: 51.

2. *Vss. 17-8: Commentary on the details*

σειραῖς ὑμετέραις

The series are that of the Erotes, see commentary to vs. 1.

δυνάμεις ἀδαμάστους

In general, the gods are so powerful that they never have to yield. Hence they are often called ἀδάμαστος, see e.g. the frequent vocative ἀδάμαστε in the *Orphic Hymns* (4, 7; 10, 3; 12, 2; 65, 2); in Proclus, see e.g. *In RP.* I 138, 7; *In Tim.* I 168, 15. In the case of Aphrodite, this adjective is all the more appropriate because neither god nor man can resist the forces of love, with the notable exception of Hestia, Artemis and Athena, see e.g. *Homeric Hymn* 5 (to Aphrodite) 7-46.

Tr. 19-21: ... *and may you steer the toilsome course of my life, / mistress, with your most righteous arrows, / while putting an end to the chilly impulse of unholy desires.*

vss. 19-20 καὶ πολύμοχθον ἐμὴν βιότοιο πορείην
ἰθύνοις σέο, πότνα, δικαιοτάτοισι βελέμνοις

Both *H.* V on the Lycian Aphrodite and this hymn end in the same way: Aphrodite is asked to influence the suppliant's life for the best (vss. 19-20; *H.* V 14: ψυχὴν δ' ἂψ ἀνάειρον ἀπ' αἴσχεος ἐς πολὺ κάλλος) and to free him from the bad kind of erotic desires (vs. 21; *H.* V 15: γηγενέος προφυγοῦσαν ὀλοίιον οἶστρον ἐρωῆς). There is, however, an important difference. In *H.* V, it is made explicit what the good is that Proclus hopes to obtain from Aphrodite: to be led towards divine Beauty. *H.* II does not specify what the righteous desires are that should govern Proclus' life.

There can be little doubt that these include the desire for divine Beauty. We note in this respect that the archery image of the anagogic Erotes in vs. 4 is repeated in vs. 20 (although all Erotes probably make use of bow and arrow). The question is, however, whether this is the only kind of desire Proclus is asking for in this hymn. The goods of Aphrodite may include especially a fertile marriage (vss. 10-2). In *H.* VII 48, the suppliant asks for children and a spouse: (δὸς) τέκνα, λέχος. It has been maintained that these wishes are an indication that Proclus did not compose *H.* VII for his own use, but — as I will argue *ad loc.* — we have no reason to exclude the possibility that Proclus at some stage in his life entertained the idea of raising a family. Therefore, I suggest that we take these righteous

desires as including more than just the philosophical desire for divine Beauty.

vs. 21 οὐχ ὁσίων παύουσα πόθων κρυόεσσαν ἐρωήν.
Both Proclus' hymns to Aphrodite end with the prayer not to fall victim to the chilly impulse of bad desires (cf. *H.* V 15) whereas in the immediately preceding verses Aphrodite is asked to give good things. Κρυόεις (chilly) is a standard epithet for things in the realm of *genesis*, cf. *H.* IV, 10: κρυερῆς γενέθλης.

The shift from a positive towards a negative request at the closing of a hymn is common in the Orphic hymns. It is often expressed in phrases similar to those in Proclus: *Orph. Hymn* 58 (to Eros) 9-10: (Eros) come to the initiates, with pure thought, | and banish from them vile impulses[28] (φαύλους δ' ἐκτοπίους θ' ὁρμὰς ἀπὸ τῶνδ' ἀπόπεμπε); *Orph. Hymn* 11 (To Pan) 22-23: (Pan) bring my life to a good conclusion | and send Pan's madness (Πανικὸν οἶστρον cf. Proclus *H.* V 15) to the ends of the earth; *Orph. Hymn* 61 (To Nemesis) 11-12: (Nemesis) grant nobility of mind, putting an end to loathsome, | unholy thoughts (παύουσα πανεχθεῖς γνώμας οὐχ ὁσίας), such as are fickle and haughty; *Orph. Hymn* 39 (To Korybas) 9-10 free from fantasies (παύων φαντασίας) a soul stunned by necessity; *Orph. Hymn* 66 (To Hephaistos) 12: end the savage rage of untiring fire (παῦσον λυσσῶσαν μανίαν πυρὸς ἀκαμάτοιο). See for other examples *Orph. Hymn* 14 (To Rhea) 12-4; *Orph. Hymn* 36 (To Artemis) 13-16; *Orph. Hymn* 68 (To Hygeia) 12-3; *Orph. Hymn* 77 (To Mnemosyne) 9-10; *Orph. Hymn* 86 (To Dream) 16-18. The underlying idea is clear: the deity can use its powers for better or for worse. The suppliant seeks to assure the positive action of the deity and to steer free from any opposite, negative, one. As far as Aphrodite is concerned, Pausanias 9, 16, 3 mentions a statue of Aphrodite Apostrophia in Thebe. Her function was to turn mankind away from illegitimate desire (ἐπιθυμίας τε ἀνόμου) and unholy actions (ἔργων ἀνοσίων cf. οὐχ ὁσίων πόθων here).[29]

For love's unholy desire, cf. Euripides *Hipp.* 764ff.: Aphrodite strikes Phaedra with a dread malady of unhallowed passion (οὐχ ὁσίων ἐρώτων νόσῳ).

[28] Translations by Athanassakis 1977.
[29] For a discussion of this statue, see Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 276-281.

III. (ΕΙΣ ΜΟΥΣΑΣ)

Introduction

From *Il.* 1,1 onwards the Muse or Muses inspire the Greek poets. The exact number of Muses vary, but at least since Hesiod their usual number is nine (cf. commentary to vs. 2): Calliope (epic poetry), Clio (history), Euterpe (flute-playing), Terpsichore (dancing), Erato (lyric poetry), Melpomene (tragedy), Thalia (comedy), Polyhymnia (hymns, pantomime), and Urania (astrology). Ironically, the hymns celebrating the goddesses who inspired so many poets are rare, see especially *Homeric Hymn* 25 (to the Muses and Apollo), and *Orphic Hymn* 76 (to the Muses).

It was Pythagoras who adopted the Muses as the patrons of philosophy. The philosopher became the servant of the Muses. This theme has been explored in great detail by Boyancé 1936. A central tenet in this cult is what Boyancé calls the 'heroïsation' (p. 233): the belief that the philosopher in his pursuit of the intellectual life, purified himself of the passions of the body, and for that reason was after death elevated to a divine existence (becomes a *heros*). This is indeed one of the important themes in the present hymn (cf. commentary to vs. 7). For Proclus, there is an extra element to philosophy envisaged as the cult of the Muses. The inspiration by the Muses takes the form of divine possession and *mania* (madness). As we have explained (chapter III § 5), Proclus attributes specific anagogic powers to different forms of divine madness. Although the Muses are patron deities of philosophy, there is little about them in Proclus' extant writings. The most detailed treatment is found in *In Crat.* §§ 176-177, pp. 100, 11-103, 23. The evidence has been discussed by Saffrey 1992[b].

Text

Ὑμνέομεν, μερόπων ἀναγώγιον ὑμνέομεν φῶς,
ἐννέα θυγατέρας μεγάλου Διὸς ἀγλαοφώνους,
αἳ ψυχὰς κατὰ βένθος ἀλωομένας βιότοιο

ἀχράντοις τελετῇσιν ἐγερσινόων ἀπὸ βίβλων
γηγενέων ῥύσαντο δυσαντήτων ὀδυνάων
καὶ σπεύδειν ἐδίδαξαν ὑπὲρ βαθυχεύμονα λήθην
ἴχνος ἔχειν, καθαρὰς δὲ μολεῖν ποτὶ σύννομον ἄστρον,
ἔνθεν ἀπεπλάγχθησαν, ὅτ’ ἐς γενεθλήιον ἀκτὴν
κάππεσον, ὑλοτραφέσσι περὶ κλήροισι μανεῖσαι.

ἀλλά, θεαί, καὶ ἐμεῖο πολυπτοίητον ἐρωὴν
παύσατε καὶ νοεροῖς με σοφῶν βακχεύσατε μύθοις·
μηδέ μ’ ἀποπλάγξειεν ἀδεισιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν
ἀτραπιτοῦ ζαθέης, ἐριφεγγέος, ἀγλαοκάρπου,
αἰεὶ δ’ ἐξ ὁμάδοιο πολυπλάγκτοιο γενέθλης
ἕλκετ’ ἐμὴν ψυχὴν παναλήμονα πρὸς φάος ἁγνόν,
ὑμετέρων βρίθουσαν ἀεξινόων ἀπὸ σίμβλων
καὶ κλέος εὐεπίης φρενοθελγέος αἰὲν ἔχουσαν.

Translation

We hymn, we hymn the light that raises man aloft,
on the nine daughters of great Zeus with splendid voices,
who have rescued from the agony of this world, so hard to bear,
the souls who were wandering in the depth of life
through immaculate rites from intellect-awaking books,
6. and have taught them to strive eagerly to follow the track leading
beyond the deep gulf of forgetfulness, and to go pure to their kindred star
from which they strayed away, when once they fell
into the headland of birth, mad about material lots.

10. But, goddesses, put an end to my much-agitated desire too
and throw me into ecstasy through the noeric words of the wise.
That the race of men without fear for the gods may not lead me
astray from the most divine and brilliant path with its splendid fruit;
15. Always draw my all-roving soul towards the holy light,
away from the hubbub of the much wandering race
heavy laden from your intellect-strengthening beehives,
and everlasting glory from its mind-charming eloquence.

Structure

After the invocation (vss. 1-2) follows an aretology (vss. 3-9), which summarizes the assistance of the Muses to fallen souls in general. The final verses (vss. 10-17) — introduced by ἀλλά — contain a prayer that the Muses may do this for Proclus in particular too (vs. 10: καὶ).

Commentary

Tr. 1-2: *We hymn, we hymn the light that raises man aloft, / on the nine daughters of great Zeus with splendid voices, …*

vs. 1 μερόπων
Perhaps Proclus has only used μέροψ (man) because it has an epic ring (cf. the Homeric expression μέροπες ἄνθρωποι e.g. *Il.* 1, 250). A more subtle explanation would be that according to Proclus μέροψ refers to the divided life of a human being (*In Crat.* § 16 p. 7, 11-12: κατὰ μὲν τὸ μεμερισμένην ἔχειν ζωὴν 'μέροψ'). The Muses in their turn perfect our manifold activities which raise us up to noeric oneness, the opposite of division (*In Crat.* § 177 p. 103, 16-8: αἱ δὲ Μοῦσαι τὰς ποικίλας ἡμῶν ἐνεργείας τὰς εἰς τὸ ἓν τὸ νοερὸν ἀναγούσας τελειοῦσιν), cf. my commentary to vs. 11 (νοεροῖς με σοφῶν βακχεύσατε μύθοις); see also the discussion by Saffrey 1992[b]: 16 of this passage. Cf. Hermeias *In Phdr.* p. 89, 31-3 for the same idea that the Apollonian inspiration leads the soul from plurality towards unity.

vs. 1 ἀναγώγιον φῶς
The Muses imbue the human soul with a form of madness that elevates it towards divine Symmetry (see chapter III § 5 and commentary to vs. 11). The Muses bring about this anagogic madness when they illuminate the trace of divine symmetry in the human soul (τὸ τῆς θείας συμμετρίας ἴχνος ἐλλάμπουσαι). Hence the resulting madness and possession (κατοκωχήν τε καὶ μανίαν) is called illumination (ἔλλαμψις), see *In RP.* I 180, 19ff.

vs. 2 ἐννέα θυγατέρας μεγάλου Διὸς ἀγλαοφώνους
The verse recalls Hesiod *Th.* 76: (the Muses) ἐννέα θυγατέρες μεγάλου Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖαι. The number of the Muses is nine ever since

Homer *Od.* 24, 60. Proclus *In Crat.* § 176 p. 102, 12ff. and Hermeias *In Phdr.* 90, 22-30 explain that the Muses are nine because the number nine contains in itself all harmonies. It depends on the monad of Apollo. The plurality of the Muses corresponds to the plurality of activities in the human being which they are supposed to bring to the Apollonian one-ness, see commentary to vs. 1.

Tr. 3-5: *(the Muses) who have rescued from the agony of this world, so hard to bear, /* the souls *that were wandering in the depth of life / through immaculate rites from intellect-awaking books, /...*

vs. 3 ψυχὰς κατὰ βένθος ἀλωομένας βιότοιο

The usual description of the fate of fallen souls in this world. The 'depth of life' (βένθος βιότοιο) is our present life in the realm of matter, cf. *H.* I 25 ὕλης νεάτοις βένθεσιν. The expression has a Chaldaean ring, see e.g. Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 148 βένθεα κόσμου; cf. Synesius *H.* 1 (3) 631 and *H.* 5 (2) 49. Since our descent into the world of matter involves forgetfulness about our transcendental origin, we just 'wander around' (ἀλάομαι), until the Muses reveal to us the way out (vss. 6-7, vs. 13). For the the wandering soul as a recurrent image in Proclus, cf. *H.* IV 11; VII 32. It is often connected with the wanderings (πλάνη) of Odysseus (see e.g. Proclus *In Parm.* V 1025, 35f.). In Homer the participle ἀλώμενος is often used in connection with Odysseus (e.g. *Od.* 2, 333; 5, 336, 5, 448; 7, 239).

vs. 4 ἀχράντοις τελετῇσιν ἐγερσινόων ἀπὸ βίβλων

This verse poses two, partially related, problems: (A) do the τελεταί refer to actual rites based on holy books or, in a metaphorical sense, to the study of texts? (B) which βίβλοι are intended?

1. *Evidence for τελεταί from books as actual rites*

On the one hand, it is very possible that Proclus refers here to real rites based on sacred books. From early times onwards, sacred books played an important role in different Greek mystery-cults. Plato *R.* 364e3ff. famously complains about vagabonds and seers, who go round the doors of the rich.

> They come up with a noisy mob of books (βίβλων ὅμαδον) written by Musaeus and Orpheus (who are descended from the Moon and the Muses, they say), which are source-books for their rituals; and they convince whole countries as well as individuals that there are in fact

> ways to be free and cleansed of sin. While we remain on earth, this involves rituals and enjoyable diversions, which also work for us after we have died and which they call initiations (τελεταί).[1]

For a discussion of other known examples of mystery texts, see Burkert 1987: 69ff. The Orphic mysteries with their sacred texts were especially associated with the Muses. As Plato notes, Orpheus was the son of the Muse Calliope.[2] Cf. *Orphic Hymn* 76 (To the Muses) 7: 'sacred and mystic rites you (sc. the Muses) taught to mortals' (αἳ τελετὰς θνητοῖς ἀνεδείξατε μυστιπ⟨ο⟩λεύτους, cf. vs. 6 ἐδίδαξαν). These Orphic rites aimed especially at securing a blessed after-life for the initiated by purifying them from pollution (cf. vs. 7 καθαρὰς δὲ μολεῖν ποτὶ σύννομον ἄστρον). From Marinus we know that Proclus practised Orphic methods of purification along with Chaldaean ones (*Vita Procli* § 18) and that he studied the Orphic scriptures (*Vita Procli* §§ 26-7). Damascius too shows a vivid interest in Orphic purification rites.[3]

2. *The τελεταί as the study of texts*

On the other hand, Proclus may be following a widespread belief in Antiquity that the cult of the Muses — i.e. study in general and especially that of philosophy — secured a blissful existence among the gods after this life. Cumont 1922: 15, in his groundbreaking study, explains: 'All who gave themselves up to works of intellect had a part of the godhead. They were purified by the high pursuit of spiritual joy and freed thereby from the passions of the body and the oppression of matter. For this reason the Muses are frequently represented on tombs.'[4] Cumont's idea was taken up and elaborated upon by Marrou 1937: 231-257 and especially in the momentous study by Boyancé 1936, see pp. 231-327 for philosophy as the cult of the Muses, and esp. pp. 294-297 for his interpretation of the present hymn along these lines. According to this interpretation, the βίβλοι

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1 Trans. Waterfield. On this text see Boyancé 1936: 11ff. and West 1983: 20ff.

2 Cf. Proclus *In Tim.* III 168, 9-15: the Muse Calliope revealed the science about the gods to her son Orpheus.

3 Damascius *In Phd.* I §11 (p. 87 ed. Norvin) quotes an Orphic fragment that promises purification from the sins of the forebears, just like Plato's Orphics did. For the correct interpretation of this purification from the sins of the deceased, see Boyancé 1936: 60ff. (who attributed the commentary to Olympiodorus as was standardly done at the time).

4 For a catalogue of these sarcophagi, see now: L. P. Faedo, 'I sarcofagi con Muse' (*ANRW* II 12, 2 1981: 65-155).

refer to such different books as the Platonic dialogues, Orphic scriptures, Chaldaean Oracles and inspired poets, in short, all books that were supposed to reveal divinely inspired wisdom. The τελεταί, then, consist in the progress in insight made by the philosopher while studying these texts.

In the light of our discussion in chapter II, we can now elaborate on the ideas put forward by Cumont and Boyancé in the case of Proclus. As we have seen, the human soul can only escape the cycle of rebirth when it manages to contemplate the Forms during its existence on earth. In order to achieve this contemplation it is necessary to participate in some way in the divine *Nous* (chapter II § 3). Just study in itself is not enough to be elevated to the state of noeric activity, it also takes divine illumination. This divine illumination may be brought about by the study of divinely inspired books. It is often described as Bacchic frenzy, as is the case in vs. 11. As we will see in the commentary *ad loc.* this Bacchic frenzy consists in the unification of the divided human soul to the degree that it is capable of contemplating the Forms. Such an inspired reading of a text does not happen automatically. This situation explains these prayers for such an illuminating reading, like the one in the present hymn, in the prooemia of the *Theologia Platonica* and the commentary on the *Parmenides*, as well as the fourth hymn (see the introduction to *H.* IV for a demonstration of the kinship of these prayers and hymns). To obtain such an inspired reading of the text is compared to the final phase of the initiations in philosophy in *Phdr.* 250c4, the so-called ἐποπτεία, i.e. the contemplation of the Forms. The resulting interpretation is the ἐποπτικώτερον exegesis as opposed to the μερικώτερον form of exegesis.[5] The latter type is produced by a soul that has not yet managed to unify itself into Bacchic frenzy but is still fragmented. See on these two forms of exegesis and their relation to the condition

[5] The terms μερικώτερον and ἐποπτικώτερον originate from Proclus *In Tim.* I 204, 24-27. Proclus ascribes the former type of exegesis especially to Porphyry and the latter to Iamblichus. A text, like Plato's *Timaeus*, which is apparently (φαινόμενον) about physics, may also be read in a metaphysical way, since the physical domain is an image of the superior metaphysical level. Porphyry restricts his interpretations to the apparent sense only, and his method is therefore qualified as μερικώτερον (more partial) by Proclus. Iamblichus, on the other hand, focuses on a global interpretation of the text (ἡ ὅλη θεωρία). He does not interpret an apparently physical text in physical terms only. Praechter made this distinction the hinge of his famous article *Richtungen und Schulen im Neuplatonismus* (1910, for a definition of the two different approaches, see p. 137).

of the human soul Pépin 1974. In short then, in this line of approach the τελεταί refer to those described in Plato *Phaedrus* in connection with the contemplation of the Forms. The study of certain βίβλοι may result in a specific state of mind which allows for contemplation of the Forms. The contemplation of the Forms in its turn guarantees an escape from the realm of matter after this life.

3. *Conclusion*

Which of the two interpretations offered above is to be preferred? Given the fact that Proclus was both a zealous practioner of rites and an ardent student of texts, it is difficult to decide. Perhaps it is best not to choose, for the two interpretations are not so much opposing as converging. As we have seen in chapter V § 3.3, the same principles of symbolism and *sympatheia* that underlie theurgical initiation rites are at work in divinely inspired texts.[6] These texts in their turn may or may not be used in mystical rites. To handle these texts in one way or another results in divine illumination and mystical revelation (cf. commentary to vs. 11), cures the forgetfullnes of which the fallen soul is suffering (cf. vs. 6) and in this way brings salvation for the soul after death (cf. vs. 7).

ἐγερσινόων

The adjective ἐγερσίνοος (intellect-awaking) occurs only in Nonnus (five times) and Proclus' hymns (*H.* I 7; VI 7). In Nonnus, the word does not have the elevated meaning of 'intellect-awaking' that it has in Proclus. He may e.g. call drunkenness ἐγερσίνοος (*D.* 12, 376). Proclus uses it only in connection with the ascent of the human soul. Commenting on *Phdr.* 245a1ff., he assigns two tasks to the Muses: to wake up the soul and to bring it to Bacchic ecstasy. Both functions are mentioned in this hymn; for the Bacchic ecstasy, see vs. 11. Proclus *In RP.* I 181, 23ff. explains: 'the awaking (ἔγερσις) is the rising up and the unperverted activity of the soul and is turning away from the fall into the realm of becoming towards the divine.' Proclus describes this process in vss. 5-7.

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[6] For a similar view, see Sheppard 1980: 145-161 on the question to what extent mystery language in Proclus is intended metaphorically. 'The principles behind the use of σύμβολα in theurgy are also the principles behind Proclus' interpretation of poetic myths and so he can transfer language from the one sphere into the other and use mystery-language to provide a terminology for allegory' (p. 161).

Tr. 6-9: … *and have taught them to strive eagerly to follow the track leading / beyond the deep gulf of forgetfulness, and to go pure to their kindred star / from which they strayed away, when once they fell / into the headland of birth, mad about material lots.*

vs. 6 σπεύδειν
Majercik 1989: 185 comments on Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 115 (χρὴ σε σπεύδειν πρὸς τὸ φάος κτλ.): 'The theme of 'haste' to the Divine World is a constant in the religious traditions of this period and parallels the theme of 'flight'.' For parallels, see comments by Majercik *ad loc.*, which depend almost completely on Des Places 1996^3: 141 n. 1 to Fr. 115. See especially Proclus *In Crat.* § 155, p. 88, 4-5 (= Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 116 trans. Majercik): 'For the Divine is accessible not to the mortals who think corporeally (cf. vss. 3 and 5 in present hymn: the souls are freed from the material realm by the Muses), but to those who, naked, hasten upward to the heights (ἄνω σπεύδουσι πρὸς ὕψος cf. vs. 6 ὑπὲρ βαθυχεύμονα λήθην for the same movement upwards).

vs. 6 βαθυχεύμονα λήθην
The Muses are traditionally associated with the power of recollection, their mother being Mnemosyne. It is a vestige of the times of oral poetry when a good memory was of essential importance to the poet. Here Proclus links this tradition to the theme of the recollection of the intelligible world in Platonism, on which see *H.* I 32 with commentary. The study of the intellect-awaking books is supposed to cure the forgetfulness mankind is suffering from, see also commentary to vs. 7 ἴχνος ἔχειν below. Cf. *Orphic Hymn* 77 (to Mnemosyne) for a prayer to the mother of the Muses to ward off evil oblivion that harms the mind of the initiates. In this case, the initiates appear to pray that they may remember and not forget secret formulas that will enable them to celebrate their mystery rites effectively. In a like manner, the Neoplatonist in order to celebrate the mysteries of philosophy needs the Muses to stir his recollection of the intelligible world.

vs. 7 ἴχνος ἔχειν
In Proclus, ἴχνη (traces) refer primarily to the traces, i.e. illuminations, of the Forms in the realm of matter, especially (but not necessarily) as found in the primal mass before the Demiurge set to work. The Platonic source is *Ti.* 53b1f., see e.g. Proclus *In Tim.* I 270, 11-16, *Theol. Plat.* IV 29, p. 84, 24-25.

Since these traces are divine sparks in the material world, they may be used as theurgical *symbola* in order to enter into communion with the gods (see chapter IV § 4.4 on theurgical symbols). As we have seen (chapter V § 3.3.1), some myths are supposed to function as theurgical *symbola*. It is, then, these *symbola* contained in holy βίβλοι of vs. 4 that constitute the track towards the divine world that the Muses teach us to follow. See e.g. Proclus *In RP.* I 74, 22 ff. who, in a discussion of the nature of symbolic poetry, observes the following: the myths of Homer do not reveal the truth to the profane, but 'only offer certain traces (ἴχνη τινά) of the whole mystagogy to those who are by nature capable of being led to the contemplation that is inaccessible to the many.'

In like manner, the divine Plato (ἔνθεος Πλάτων) has inserted his thoughts on the gods (τὰς περὶ θεῶν ἐννοίας) in all his dialogues in order to lead the lovers of the divine towards recollection of the universal principles (τῶν ὅλων ἀνάμνησιν, cf. here the fact that the Muses make the souls flee forgetfulness). These thoughts are compared to the 'images' (ἰνδάλματα) of the divine world which the Demiurge has sown into the cosmos in order that everything reverts upon the divine so far as it is akin to it (*Theol. Plat.* I 5, pp. 23, 22-24, 11). The 'images' are the theurgical symbols discussed in Proclus *De Sacrificio*, as Saffrey-Westerink observe in their n. 1.

vs. 7 καθαρὰς δὲ μολεῖν ποτὶ σύννομον ἄστρον

The idea of a native ἄστρον from which the individual soul descended into a body and to which it will return after a virtuous life in this world finds its origin in Plato *Ti.* 41d8ff: after the creation of the cosmos the Demiurge allots each soul to a star on which the souls are mounted 'as if on vehicles' (ὡς ἐς ὄχημα). Meanwhile he shows them the nature of the universe and instructs them about the laws of their destiny. These entail that the incarnation in a body necessarily exposes the soul to sensations and emotions. Mastery of these results in a virtuous life, subjection to them in a wicked life. 'And anyone who lived well for his appointed time would return home to his native ἄστρον and live an appropriately blissful life (πάλιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ συννόμου πορευθεὶς οἴκησιν ἄστρου, βίον εὐδαίμονα καὶ συνήθη ἕξοι).' It is to this life that the Muses lead the souls after death. In Plato, the native ἀστέρες corresponds to the stars (see Taylor 1928: 555f. and Cornford 1973: 143). In Proclus' interpretation, however, they are the planets, see Proclus *In Tim.* III 261, 12-263, 22.

Proclus *In Tim.* III 290, 18-28 discusses this passage. Proclus distinguishes between the native stars properly, which are souls (*In Tim.* III 260, 24ff.) and their 'aetherial vehicles' (τὸ ὄχημα τὸ αἰθέριον), i.e. the physical stars.[7] The soul of e.g. the sun is the universal Sun-soul on which the individual sun-souls depend. Souls, after a life 'in which they obeyed justice and the gods' (hence they are called καθαρός in the hymn), return to their universal soul and install themselves in its aetherial vehicle. They are now 'full of noeric life' and together with their universal soul they govern the cosmos and exercise providence towards it (for stars governing the cosmos, see *H.* I commentary to vss. 15-17). In the mean time, however, they can continue their own intellections. This is the blissful after-life.

vss. 8-9 ἔνθεν ἀπεπλάγχθησαν, ὅτ' ἐς γενεθλήιον ἀκτὴν | κάππεσον
Although maritime metaphors are common in Neoplatonism (see commentary to *H.* I 30), it is somewhat strange to read that the descending souls fall into the 'headland of birth' (γενεθλήιος ἀκτή). Normally, stormy waters symbolize the realm of matter in which the human soul is at the risk of drowning, see commentary on *H.* VI 10-12. To reach land is a symbol for salvation, cf. the oracle in Porphyry *Vita Plotini* 22, 26, where the soul of Plotinus is said to swim 'to the banks of a headland surrounded by waters' (ἐς ᾐόνα νηχύτου ἀκτῆς). Perhaps we should understand it as follows: according to *Ti.* 41e3f., all souls make an equal first descent into the realm of matter for the first time. If they choose to live well, they will return to their native stars. If, however, they turn themselves to the bodies, they become slaves of Heimarmene and are trapped in this world of generation (Proclus *In Tim.* III 274, 14-275, 23). A headland is the boundary between sea and land: the soul may walk landward, i.e. return to its safe native star, or plunge itself into the sea, i.e. indulge itself completely into the realm of matter. We may compare this to the characterisation of humans as 'inhabiting a borderland' (μεθόριος) by later Neoplatonists and particularly Platonizing theologians (on the term, see Lloyd 1990: 123). This description is based on the same idea that the human soul may either descend or ascend.

[7] Here we touch on the famous doctrine of the soul vehicles, for which see the classical treatment by Dodds 1963[2]: 313-321, for further literature on soul vehicles, see Siorvanes 1996: 200 n. 27.

vs. 9 ὑλοτραφέσσι περὶ κλήροισι μανεῖσαι
In Plato *R.* 617d2 ff. (the myth of Er), the prophet of Lachesis takes the lots (κλῆροι) from her knees in order to determine the future existence of the souls that are on the verge of descending into this world. He casts them after a short explanation to the souls about the procedure: the souls are free to choose their own daemon and their own sort of life. The lots are used to establish the order in which the souls may choose.

Proclus *In Tim.* III 323, 16ff. connects the myth of Er with the account in the *Timaeus* about the creation of mankind (see commentary on vs. 7: καθαρὰς δὲ μολεῖν ποτὶ σύννομον ἄστρον), although Plato does not provide any clue to do so. According to the former, a lot is the total sum of lives that the All offers to a soul. Paris, for example, is a soul that is offered the choice between three different lives: a royal life, the life of a lover and martial life. The totality of these three lives is his lot (*In RP.* II 263, 17ff.).

The lots are called 'material' (ὑλοτραφής) because they partly determine the existence of the soul in the material realm. The madness (μανεῖσαι) of the souls is not the positive one of divine inspiration mentioned below (see vs. 11 βακχεύσατε), but the insanity of the souls that prefer a life in the realm of matter over one in the intelligible realm. For an example of madness in a negative sense, see Proclus *In Alc.* 293, 17ff.: the soul that is suffering from a double ignorance — i.e. the soul that is ignorant of the fact that it has forgotten about the intelligible realm when it descended — is victim of a long-lasting madness (μανία πολυχρόνιος).

Tr. 10-11: *But, goddesses, put an end to my much-agitated desire too / and throw me into ecstasy through the noeric words of the wise.*

vss. 10-11 ἀλλά, θεαί, καὶ ἐμεῖο πολυπτοίητον ἐρωὴν | παύσατε
For ἀλλά marking a transition from the aretology to the prayers proper, see *H.* I 33. As καὶ indicates, the argument why the Muses should grant Proclus' prayers is one of the *da-quia-hoc-dare-tuum*-type: your work consists in helping souls (vss. 3-9), so now help me now *too.*[8]

For the prayer to put an end to the bad desires of which the soul suffers because it is in a body, see *H.* II 21; V 15.

[8] For this type of argumentation, see Bremer 1981: 196.

vs. 11 νοεροῖς με σοφῶν βακχεύσατε μύθοις
For the Neoplatonists Bacchic frenzy (βακχεία) is a state of perfection of the human soul. The fallen human soul is characterized by multiplicity. Since like is always known by like, the soul in this situation is incapable of contemplating the noetic entities, i.e. the Forms, which are characterized by unity. The soul must therefore cleanse itself from this multiplicity and seek to become as unified as possible. The soul that manages to do so is able to contemplate the intelligible world at the level of Nous and is called a 'Bacchant' after the Orphic text cited by Plato *Phd.* 69d1 (Many carry the thyrsus, few are Bacchants), see e.g. Marinus *Vita Procli* § 22 (Proclus as a Bacchant); Hermeias *In Phdr.* 172, 10ff.; Damascius *In Phd.* §§ 166, 171 ed. Westerink; Olympiodorus *In Phd.* 7 § 10; 8 § 7 ed. Westerink. The Neoplatonists relate this text to their 'spiritual' interpretation of the Orphic story of the destruction of Bacchus by the Titans and his subsequent salvation, and the rites that go with the story (see my commentary to *H.* VII 11-15).

The Neoplatonists associate the true Bacchant of the *Phd.* with the poetic madness brought about by the Muses as described by Plato *Phdr.* 245a1ff. in his catalogue of forms of *mania*: 'Third comes the possession and the madness of the Muses. This madness, which falls on a soft and pure soul, wakes it up and brings it to ecstasy (ἐκβακχεύουσα) under the influence of songs and other poetry, teaches posterity by honouring the innumerable deeds of the Ancients.' Proclus describes this Bacchic frenzy as 'a divinely inspired movement and an indefatigable dance around the divine, which perfects those who are possessed.'[9] This 'indefatigable dance' consists in the contemplation of the intelligible at the level of Nous. It is the 'madness superior to temperance' that characterizes the best of the three types of poetry distinguished by Proclus (see chapter VI § 2.2). This madness does not only befall the inspired poet directly. The study of these poets may bring about the same madness on the part of the reader (see chapter V § 3.3.1), cf. the case of Plato's Ion who as a student of Homer partakes in the divine madness. Proclus here prays for such indirect inspiration by the Muses through the study of inspired μύθοι.

From the foregoing discussion it should not be concluded that the μύθοι of the σοφοί refer to the mythical poems of a Homer and a

[9] *In RP.* I 181, 26f.: ἡ δὲ βακχεία κίνησις ἔνθεος καὶ χορεία περὶ τὸ θεῖον ἄτρυτος, τελεσιουργὸς τῶν κατεχομένων.

Hesiod only (cf. my commentary to the βίβλοι of vs. 4). Μύθοι may just be words, cf. *H.* VII, 6 ἐμόν μῦθον. Texts by inspired philosophers like Plato were supposed to induce the same Bacchic frenzy in the souls of the readers, see e.g. Proclus *Theol. Plat.* I 1, p. 6, 23ff.: Platonists of the third generation, like Iamblichus and Theodorus, roused their own thinking to Bacchic frenzy about Plato's writings (περὶ τῶν τοῦ Πλάτωνος τὴν ἑαυτῶν διάνοιαν ἀνεβάκχευσαν); *Theol. Plat.* III 23, p. 83, 15: Proclus partook together with his master Syrianus in the Bacchic frenzy about the doctrine of Plato's *Parmenides* (περὶ τὴν τοῦ Παρμενίδου θεωρίαν συνεβακχεύσαμεν), which reveals sacred trails (τὰς ἱερὰς ἀτραποὺς cf. vs. 13) that wake us — who have been completely asleep — up towards the unspeakable mystagogy (ἀνεγειρούσας cf. vs. 4 ἐγερσινόων βίβλων); *In Parm.* I 618, 4f.: Syrianus, the man who explained the *Parmenides* to Proclus was in very truth a fellow Bacchant with Plato (συμβακχεύσας).

Tr. 12-13: *That the race of men without fear for the gods may not lead me / astray from the most divine and brilliant path that bears splendid fruit;*

vs. 12 μηδέ μ' ἀποπλάγξειεν ἀδεισιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν

The 'race of men that do not fear the gods' are probably the Christians, as was already suggested by Boissonade.[10] In order not to provoke the Christian authorities, Proclus abstained from direct, open attacks on the Christians. He made unfriendly allusions ('code phrases') to them instead, which have been collected and discussed by Saffrey 1975. One of these code phrases for Christians is 'atheist' (ἄθεος),[11] cf. ἀδεισίθεος here.

I suggest that we interpret the fear to be led astray (ἀποπλάζω) in the specific context of a hymn to the Muses. Christianity put forward once again Plato's old reproach that Homer and others are impious in their representation of the divine, see e.g. Augustine *De civitate Dei* 2, 14; Basil *Ad adolescentes de legendis gentilium libris* IV 19ff. (ed. Boulenger). This gave rise to a dismissive attitude towards these poets, as Proclus *In RP.* I 74, 4ff. and Julian *Ep.* 61 (42) 423a-b observe. Proclus' attempt to save Homer from Plato's criticism was

[10] See Vogt 1957: 68, who himself shows some reservations ('verum haud scio an his verbis nisi 'omnes qui deum non timeant' nihil exprimatur'). However, the systematic treatment of 'code-phrases' for Christians in Proclus by Saffrey 1975 adds extra conviction to Boissonade's suggestion. Cf. also Cousin 1864: 1318 n. 4, Wilamowitz 1907: 276, and Meunier 1935: 83f. n. 4 , who all accept it.

[11] Saffrey 1975: 205f.; Segonds 1986 *In Alc.* vol. II, 429 n. 7 to p. 307.

partially prompted by this development.[12] Here he asks the Muses, the patrons of the 'intellect-waking books' under threat, to guard him against such an attitude.

vs. 13 ἀτραπιτοῦ ζαθέης, ἐριφεγγέος, ἀγλαοκάρπου,
The Platonic philosopher follows the small path (ἀτραπιτός) as opposed to the highways followed by the masses. The simile originates from Plato *Phd.* 66b. The detachment of the body is likely to be, as it were, a path (ὥσπερ ἀτραπός τις) that will lead us and our reasoning (λόγος) out of our present sorry state towards what we really desire: contemplation of the truth. Examples abound, see e.g. *Theol. Plat.* III 23, p. 83, 16 (quoted above in the commentary on vs. 11), Synesius *H.* I (III) 536f., and the interesting epitaph commemorating a certain Arideikes (*BCH* 36.230), dating from the third century CE: (we honour) the Muses, who fostered you with their nursing hands towards the Platonic trails (Πλατωνείους ἀτραπιτούς).' On this epitaph and for other examples of the Platonic ἀτραπιτός/ ἀτραπός, see Boyancé 1936: 278-281.

The Neoplatonic commentators on the *Phd.* associated this path with the Pythagorean maxim 'not to tread the highway', see Damascius *In Phd.* I §101: ἀτραπὸς δὲ ὁ λόγος, ἐπειδὴ οὐ βαδίζει τὰς λεωφόρους ὁ φιλόσοφος κατὰ τὸ Πυθαγόρειον ('The reasoning is called a 'path', because the philosopher, following the maxim, does not tread the highways.' trans. Westerink) and Olympiodorus *In Phd.* 5 § 4. The latter connects it, somewhat surprisingly, also to Callimachus' famous programmatic statement in the prooemium of the *Aetia* (I Fr. 1, 25ff. ed. Pfeiffer) that he will not follow the beaten track. The Pythagorean maxim was at the lips of the Neoplatonists, see e.g. Iamblichus *Vita Pythagorica* 105; Porphyry *Vita Pythagorica* 42; Proclus *In Parm.* I 685, 34ff.

The path leads towards the contemplation of the intelligible world (the Bacchic frenzy of vs. 11), hence the three positive adjectives ζαθέος, ἐριφεγγής, and ἀγλαοκάρπος. For the contemplation of the intelligible as 'fruits' (καρποί), see e.g. *Theol. Plat.* IV 17, p. 51, 10-12; as Saffrey-Westerink remark (p. 154 n. 3 to p. 51), it is an expression from the *Chaldaean Oracles.*

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12 For Plato's criticism of Homer and Proclus' response to it, see chapter VI § 1-2.

Tr. 14-17: *Always draw my soul that roves around in all directions / away from the hubbub of the much wandering race towards the holy light, / weighted down with the gifts from* your *intellect-strengthening beehives, and / forever famous for its mind-charming eloquence.*

vss. 14-5 αἰεὶ δ᾽ ἐξ ὁμάδοιο πολυπλάγκτοιο γενέθλης
ἕλκετ᾽ ἐμὴν ψυχὴν παναλήμονα πρὸς φάος ἁγνόν

Just as the Muses in general help erring souls to escape from the realm of matter (vss. 3-5), Proclus now asks them to elevate his own wandering soul towards the divine light. The world of becoming is characterized by noise (ὅμαδος), cf. *H.* I 30 βαρυσμαράγου βιότοιο. An ὅμαδος is especially the noise of the confused voices of a number of persons (L.-S.-J. cf. the 'βίβλων ὅμαδον' in Plato *R.* 364e3 for the pot-pourri of texts used by charlatans who practise purifying rites). This corresponds to the confused impression that the world of becoming makes on us: we have different sensations all the time from this ever-changing world, so they never provide us with sound and exact knowledge. On the contrary, these sensations lead our thinking astray (*In Alc.* 245, 14-17). The adjective πολύπλαγκτος refers to this inherent instability of the world of becoming.

The prayer that the gods may draw (ἕλκειν) the soul of the suppliant to the heavens is a recurrent one in the hymns, see *H.* IV 3, VI 7. Although the verb is not used in that sense in the Chaldaean Oracles, this recurrence gives one the impression that it is a formula, if not a Chaldaean one. Julian *Or.* VIII [V] *On the Mother of the Gods* 12, 172c1f. writes that the rays of the sun draw and uplift (ἕλξει καὶ ἀνάξει) the souls of the philosophers to the intelligible, a formula borrowed from Plato *R.* 533d2: dialectic draws and guides (ἕλκει καὶ ἀνάγει) the eye of the soul that is buried in the mud upwards (see Lewy 1978^2: 186 n. 37).

The holy light (φάος ἁγνόν) is that of the divine world (cf. *H.* VI 9, VII 33), in this case especially the light of the divine Symmetry, see chapter III § 5.

vs. 16 ὑμετέρων βρίθουσαν ἀεξινόων ἀπὸ σίμβλων

In Greek mythology the bee is sacred to the Muses, cf. Proclus *In RP.* II 1, 1: τὴν μέλισσαν ἱερὰν μέν φασι τῶν Μουσῶν εἶναι. The honey that they produce is supposed to lend mantic powers to those who eat it (Waszink 1974: 9ff.). According to Plato *Ion* 533e3ff., the Muses bring the poet to a state of Bacchic frenzy. It is in this state, the poets

tell us, that they bring us their melodies 'gathered from rills that run with honey, out of the glens and gardens of the Muses, and they bring them as the bees do honey, flying like the bees' (trans. Cooper). In their turn, these inspired poets, inspire others through their poetry (cf. vs. 11: the study of inspired texts may inspire the student with Bacchic frenzy). Waszink 1974: 17-19 discussing this passage quotes with approval Flashar's comment on this passage:

> Platon vergleicht hier mit der Dichtung eine Form des ἐνθουσιασμός, die mit dem dichterischen Schaffen ursprünglich nichts zu tun hat. Dionysus bringt ein Stück Himmel den Bakchen auf die Erde, den Honig, der Götterspeise war.

The same holds true for Proclus: for him, the gift of the Muses is enlightenment, the anagogic light sent from heaven, which may or may not be expressed in the form of a poem.

vs. 17 καὶ κλέος εὐεπίης φρενοθελγέος αἰὲν ἔχουσαν.

Requests for the success of the poet are a recurrent element in Greek hymns, as Race 1982: 11 observes. Of the examples he cites, see especially Theocritus 22, 14-15: χαίρετε, Λήδας τέκνα, καὶ ἡμετέροις κλέος ὕμνοις ἐσθλὸν ἀεὶ πέμποιτε. To this Proclus *H.* I 43-44, and *Orph. Hymns* 76 (to the Muses) 12 can be added. The adjective φρενοθελγής is rare and occurs only in late texts, especially in Nonnus, who too sometimes uses it in connection with poetry, see e.g. *D.* 1, 406 (φρενοθελγέος οἶστρον ἀοιδῆς) and 2, 10 (φρενοθελγέα ῥυθμον ἀοιδῆς).

As we have seen, Proclus does not restrict the domain of the Muses to the composition of poetry. They also inspire the students of all different kinds of holy texts with Bacchic frenzy (vs. 11). It is also as such an inspired commentator on holy texts that one may enjoy fame for one's eloquence, as was the case with Proclus himself. According to Marinus *Vita Procli* § 23 — in a description which recalls Porphyry *Vita Plotini* 13, 4ff. — Proclus did not seem to speak without divine inspiration, but instead with a radiant face and in beautiful language (λόγους παγκάλους). Cf. also the description of Olympius' eloquence (Damascius *Vita Isidor.* Frr. 92 and *93, pp. 69 and 71) who was said to charm (ἐκήλει cf. φρενοθελγής here) his audience.

IV. (ΥΜΝΟΣ ΚΟΙΝΟΣ ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΥΣ)

Introduction

1. Hymn IV, *a prayer to the gods of the Chaldaean Oracles?*

This hymn is perhaps the most enigmatic of all because of the mysterious identity of the gods invoked. Before we can comment on the hymn in detail we should first seek to clarify who they are and why they are invoked. For a long time it was generally agreed that *H.* IV addressed all gods, as is apparent from the fact that Abel 1885: 280, Ludwich 1897: 145 and Vogt 1957: 30 entitled it ΥΜΝΟΣ ΚΟΙΝΟΣ ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΥΣ in their editions of the hymns.[1] In his review of Vogt's edition, Westerink 1958: 370 argued that the hymn was too definite to refer to all gods in general.[2] He suggested that the anonymous θεοί (vs. 1) are the gods of the Chaldaean Oracles, to whom Proclus sometimes refers simply as οἱ θεοί.[3] This suggestion was taken up and elaborated upon by Saffrey 1981^{b} (cf. Saffrey 1981^{c}: 165-166). In this article he collects all expressions with a Chaldaean ring. However, as had already been observed by Westerink, and was admitted by Saffrey *o.c.* p. 312 n. 67, almost all of these expressions figure in the other hymns too, as will become apparent from the commentary below. Furthermore, the τελεταί (vs. 4) do not necessarily indicate Chaldaean ceremonies, but may have a rather vague meaning, as Westerink observes (cf. commentary). As such, these do not force us to think of the gods of the Chaldaean Oracles.[4]

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[1] It should be remembered that most titles of the hymns were probably added by Gemistos Plethon; they are certainly not by Proclus, see chapter I § 2.

[2] '…das alles (ist) doch zu konkret um auf das ganze neuplatonische Pantheon bezogen zu werden. Auch die deutliche Verwandtschaft mit der 3. Hymne (an die Musen) legt den Gedanken an eine bestimmmte Göttergruppe nahe.'

[3] Cf. Saffrey 1981^{b}: 298.

[4] Moreover, is it correct to speak of 'the gods of the Chaldaean Oracles' anyway? It is true that some gods, like Hecate and the Teletarchs play a special role in theurgy. But then again, the major task that Proclus had set himself was to show that the various theological systems were in perfect harmony which each other (see chapter II § 4.5). So, e.g., both the Chaldaean Oracles and the Orphic poems were holy scriptures in which the gods had revealed themselves to mankind, albeit under different names.

I will argue in favour of the old position that this hymn is directed to all gods. Both the *Theologia Platonica* and the commentary on the *Parmenides* open with prayers to all the gods. There are no reasons to assume that these gods are the Chaldaean gods only. Since these prayers resemble the present hymn in great detail, we have no reason to assume that the gods invoked in the hymn are the Chaldaean gods only. Comparison with *H.* III to the Muses adds extra weight to this argument. The Muses are certainly not Chaldaean divinities, but both hymns resemble each other strikingly. This seems to rule out any claim that *H.* IV is of a typical Chaldaean nature.

2. H. IV *compared with the opening prayer of the* Theol. Plat. *and* In Parm.

Proclus ends the first chapter of the *Theol. Plat.* with some sort of prayer (*Theol. Plat.* I 1, pp. 7, 17-8, 15). He invokes the gods to kindle the light of truth in his soul now that he is about to explain Plato's writings about them. First, we note that Proclus invokes the gods without any further qualification (p. 7, 17 τοὺς θεούς) as he does in *H.* IV 1 and 13. Accepting the advice of Plato's Timaeus, he chooses the gods as his guides (p. 8, 6f. ἡγεμόνας, cf. *H.* IV 13 ἡγεμονῆες) in his study of Plato. Their guidance is expressed in nautical metaphors: p. 7, 19 κατιθύνειν; p. 8, 2 κυβερνωμένους, comparable to the 'helm of wisdom' (vs. 1). All through the first chapter the writings by Plato are depicted as a mystagogy (e.g. p. 6, 3 τῶν ἀληθινῶν τελετῶν, cf. *H.* IV 4 τελετῇσι, 15 τελετάς). This mystagogy results in a divine illumination in the human soul (p. 7, 17f. τὸ τῆς ἀληθείας φῶς ἀνάπτειν ἡμῶν ταῖς ψυχαῖς, cf. *H.* IV 6 νεύσατ' ἐμοὶ φάος ἁγνόν), for without divine light, it is impossible to comprehend anything of the divine (pp. 7, 24- 8, 1), cf. vss. 7-8: we know the divine through its illumination of us.

The first pages of the commentary on the *Parmenides* (*In Parm.* I 617, 1-618, 16) contain a prayer to all gods and all goddesses (618, 1 εὔχομαι τοῖς θεοῖς πᾶσι καὶ πάσαις, cf. vs. 1). In the course of the prayer no names of gods and goddesses are given, although Proclus distinguishes between different levels of gods. They are asked to guide Proclus' intellect in the study of the *Parmenides* he is about to start (617, 1f. ποδηγῆσαί μου τὸν νοῦν εἰς τὴν προκειμένην θεωρίαν, cf. vs. 13 ἡγεμονῆες and *Theol. Plat.* I 1, p. 7, 20 ποδηγετεῖν) and to kindle the shining light of truth (617, 3f. φῶς ἐν ἐμοὶ στιλπνὸν τῆς ἀληθείας ἀνάψαντας) so that he may come to a better knowledge about beings.

The request for illumination is repeated at the end of the prayer, when the higher powers are asked to be propitious and to be ready with their gifts to illuminate Proclus with the light that comes from the gods and leads upwards (618, 16 προλάμπουσα τὸ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀναγωγὸν φῶς, cf. vs. 2: ἀναγώγιον ἁψάμενοι πῦρ, vs. 6: φάος ἁγνόν). Plato is thought of as a divinely inspired author (617, 7 ἐνθέου τοῦ Πλάτωνος, cf. vs. 5 ζαθέων δ' ἀπὸ βίβλων). The study of the *Parmenides* is compared to the initiation into a mystery cult (617, 24-618, 1 τὴν μετουσίαν τῆς ἐποπτικωτάτης τοῦ Πλάτωνος καὶ μυστικωτάτης θεωρίας). Although the evil daemons do not rear their ugly heads in this prayer, Syrianus' exegesis of the *Parmenides* makes him the chief author of salvation (618, 12 σωτηρίας ἀρχηγόν, cf. vs. 5: σαωτῆρες μεγάλοι) for men who now live and for those who come hereafter. The prayer to stop Proclus from erring about things that are not (617, 10 τῆς περὶ τὰ μὴ ὄντα πλάνης), i.e. taking the world of becoming for the real thing, recurs in vs. 11.

3. H. IV *compared with* H. III *to the Muses*

One important element that dominates *H.* IV is largely absent from the two prayers: the salvation of the soul from the dangers of the realm of matter. True, according to *In Parm.* the gods sent Syrianus the divinely inspired commentator of the *Parmenides* as the chief author of salvation, but that is all. We hear nothing about chilling penalties, cold waves, chains and so on. Saffrey 1981[b]: 302ff. sees in this an important indication that the gods invoked are those of the Chaldaean Oracles. However, in the other hymns these descriptions abound. We find them not just in a hymn to an important deity of the Chaldaean pantheon like Helios in *H.* I, but also in e.g. *H.* VII 32-42 to Athena (according to Saffrey 1981[b]: 302 not a Chaldaean deity).

Most instructive in this respect is the comparison of *H.* IV to *H.* III. The Muses are certainly not Chaldaean deities. All the same, as Westerink 1958: 370 had already observed, both hymns are clearly related. We briefly note the points of correspondence: both the anonymous deities of *H.* IV and the Muses help the μερόπες (*H.* III 1; *H.* IV 2) to escape the realm of matter by means of τελεταί (*H.* III 4; *H.* IV 4) taken ἀπὸ βίβλων (*H.* III 3; *H.* IV 5). The souls are now trapped in a sea of forgetfulness (*H.* III 6; *H.* IV 8), but the holy light φάος ἁγνόν (*H.* III 15; *H.* IV 6) and *mythoi* (*H.* III 11; *H.* IV 15) bring

salvation; they constitute a divine path (ἀτραπιτός/ἀταρπός *H.* III 13; *H.* IV 14) away from this place. In both cases the material world is described as a horrible place (*H.* III 5; *H.* IV 10) in which the soul wanders around (*H.* III 15 ψυχὴν παναλήμονα; *H.* IV 11 ψυχὴν οὐκ ἐθέλουσαν ἐμὴν ἐπὶ δηρὸν ἀλᾶσθαι). In short then, there is little that brands *H.* IV as typical Chaldaean as opposed to *H.* III.

4. *Conclusions*

We can now see a pattern arising: the prayers in *Theol. Plat.* and *In Parm.* are requests for an illuminated reading of the Platonic texts under discussion, as is *H.* III to the Muses for such a reading of holy books in general (see commentary to vss. 4 and 11). This is also the objective of this hymn (see commentary to vss. 5 and 15). We have no more reason to suppose that the gods invoked in this case are Chaldaean deities than we have in the case of the prayers to 'the gods' in the prooemia to the *Theol. Plat.* and *In Parm.* The holy books mentioned in *H.* IV 5 undoubtedly include the books of the Chaldaean Oracles, but also other authoritative writings to which we find textual allusions in this hymn, like Hesiod or the Orphic scriptures (vs. 3), Homer (vss. 6-7), and Plato (vss. 12 and 13, and 15).

Text

Κλῦτε, θεοί, σοφίης ἱερῆς οἴηκας ἔχοντες,
οἳ ψυχὰς μερόπων ἀναγώγιον ἁψάμενοι πῦρ
ἕλκετ' ἐς ἀθανάτους, σκότιον κευθμῶνα λιπούσας
ὕμνων ἀρρήτοισι καθηραμένας τελετῇσι.
κλῦτε, σαωτῆρες μεγάλοι, ζαθέων δ' ἀπὸ βίβλων
νεύσατ' ἐμοὶ φάος ἁγνὸν ἀποσκεδάσαντες ὁμίχλην,
ὄφρα κεν εὖ γνοίην θεὸν ἄμβροτον ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα·
μηδέ με ληθαίοις ὑπὸ χεύμασιν οὐλοὰ ῥέζων
δαίμων αἰὲν ἔχοι μακάρων ἀπάνευθεν ἐόντα,
μὴ κρυερῆς γενέθλης ἐνὶ κύμασι πεπτωκυῖαν
ψυχὴν οὐκ ἐθέλουσαν ἐμὴν ἐπὶ δηρὸν ἀλᾶσθαι
Ποινή τις κρυόεσσα βίου δεσμοῖσι πεδήσῃ.

ἀλλά, θεοί, σοφίης ἐριλαμπέος ἡγεμονῆες,
κέκλυτ', ἐπειγομένῳ δὲ πρὸς ὑψιφόρητον ἀταρπὸν
ὄργια καὶ τελετὰς ἱερῶν ἀναφαίνετε μύθων.

Translation

Hearken, you gods holding the helm of holy wisdom,
who, having kindled an upward-leading fire, draw to the immortals
human souls, who leave the dark hole behind,
purified by the secret initiations of hymns.
Hearken, great saviours, and grant me from very divine books
pure light, scattering the mist,
so that I know well an immortal god from a man;
that a daemon, doing cruel things, may not hold me forever submerged
in the streams of forgetfulness, while I am far away from the blessed ones,
that a chilling Penalty may not bind my soul with the fetters of life,
which, fallen into the waves of cold becoming,
does not want to wander all too long.

But, gods, leaders towards bright-shining wisdom,
hearken and reveal to me, while hurrying to the upward leading track,
the secret rites and initiations of the holy words.

Structure

The hymn starts with an invocation of the gods of wisdom (vs. 1) and proceeds with the argument why the gods should pay attention to the hymn of the *da-quia-hoc-dare-tuum-est* type[5] (vss. 2-4: it is your task to grant the mortals illumination and salvation). The prayer continues after a renewed invocation with the request (vs. 5) in which the supplicant asks the gods to grant him too this illumination (vss. 5-12). The last three verses summarize the hymn: a renewed invocation with a prayer for illumination from whole texts recalls both vs. 1 and vss. 5-6.

We note that the pivot of *H.* IV is the prayer for wisdom obtained by illumination from holy books. The gods invoked are gods of

[5] For this type of argumentation, see Bremer 1981: 196.

wisdom (vss. 1, 13). The prayer for illumination from books is repeated twice at crucial positions in the structure of the hymn: at the beginning of the request (vs. 5) and at the very end (vs. 15). In both cases, it is proceeded by an invocation (vs. 5: κλῦτε; vs. 14: κέκλυτ'). The prayer not to fall victim to an evil demon (vss. 8-9) depends on the foregoing one for illumination, as the difference in modi shows. Proclus prays for illumination from the holy books so that he can tell the difference between man and god (γνοίην: final subjunctive) with the result that an evil demon cannot keep him in the gulfs of forgetfulness (ἔχοι: optative). In this case, the optative expresses the less immediate purpose conceived as a consequence of the action of the subjunctive.[6]

Commentary

Tr. 1: *Hearken, you gods holding the helm of holy wisdom, …*

vs. 1 θεοί

Proclus invokes all gods together, not just those of the Chaldaean Oracles, as is argued by Saffrey 1981[b] (see discussion in *Introduction*).

vs. 1 σοφίης ἱερῆς οἴηκας

Wisdom (σοφία) is one of the characteristics of the gods. It is part of the famous Chaldaean triad of divine attributes which consists — in ascending order — in divine Beauty (τό θεῖον κάλλος), Wisdom (σοφία), and Goodness (τὸ ἀγαθόν). This triad is in everything and pervades the All. All things, being full of the elements of this triad, return to these divine perfections by means of a triad of middle terms (see *Theol. Plat.* I 25, pp. 109, 4-110, 16). This triad of middle terms, Faith (πίστις), Truth (ἀλήθεια), and Love (ἔρως), are the three cardinal virtues of the Chaldaean system. They purify us and bring us back to the divine.[7] For this elevation towards the gods, which takes the form of *mania*, see the discussion in chapter III § 5.

The metaphor of the helmsman (the gods holding the οἴαξ of wisdom) is an old one. It is used mostly to express the relation

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[6] Smyth 1956: 494-495, Kühner-Gerth vol. II 1904^3: 387, cf. *H.* I 31-2.

[7] *In Tim.* I 212, 19-22 (=Fr. 46 Chaldaean Oracles); lit.: Hoffmann 2000, Festugière (trans. *In Tim.* vol. 2) 1967: 34 n. 2, Lewy 1978^2: 144-146.

between the soul and the body, between god and the world, or god and the human soul.[8] Here it refers to the relation between the gods and the world and especially the human soul. The gods exercise providence towards their products, notably including the human souls. Hence the gods are called πατέρες, ἡγεμόνες (cf. vs. 13) and ἄρχοντες (Proclus *Theol. Plat.* I 15, p. 72, 1f.), 'steering everything as if standing on the stern' (*Theol. Plat.* I 15, p. 72, 13f. = Plato *Criti.* 109c2 οἷον ἐκ πρύμνης τὰ πάντα κατευθύνουσιν, the metaphor of the helmsman). They exercise this providence through the triad of middle terms discussed above: 'For all things are steered (κυβερναταί, once again the metaphor of the helmsman) and exist in these three (sc. Eros, Truth, and Faith), says the Oracle' (Proclus *In Alc.* 52, 15-6 = Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 48).

The 'helm of holy wisdom', then, is Truth by means of which the gods steer the universe and through which the human soul is united with the divine Wisdom in the same way as it is united to divine Beauty by means of Love in *H.* II and V.

> **Tr. 2-4:** …*who, after having kindled an upward-leading fire, draw to the immortals / the souls of the humans, that leave behind the dark hole, / purified by the secret initiations of hymns.*

vs. 2 οἳ ψυχὰς μερόπων ἀναγώγιον ἁψάμενοι πῦρ

The Chaldaean Oracles apply the term 'fire' (πῦρ) to the noetic substance of the human intellect that subsists in the soul and which makes it possible for us to ascend and to enter into contact with the gods (see Lewy 1978²: 171f.; Saffrey 1981ᵇ: 300f.; Segonds *In Alc.* vol. II 1986: 396 n. 9 to p. 248). The gods themselves kindle this fire: when they produce in us a kind of superior knowledge, they show us the way to the intelligible 'and kindle elevating fires'' (τοὺς πυρσοὺς ἀναπτουσαι τοὺς ἀναγωγούς *In Alc.* 188, 17-8 = Chaldaean Oracles Frr. 126 and 190).[9] They may do so through the study of inspired books like those by Plato: the Platonic theology shows the ways of ascent towards God and 'kindles a fire in the souls' (τὸν ἐν αὐταῖς ἀνάψασα πυρσόν) which connects them to the transcendence of the

[8] On this image, see Ferwerda 1965: 154-156; Saffrey 1981ᵇ: 299-300.

[9] The present verse is another indication that Des Places 1996: 111 was right to suppose that Fr. 126 (πυρσὸν ἀνάψ') and Fr. 190 (ἀναγωγός) should be taken together, cf. Segonds *In Alc.* vol. II 1986: 396 n. 9 to p. 248, Majercik 1989: 211 commentary to Fr. 190.

One (*Theol. Plat.* III 1, p. 5, 15-16). Cf. the fact that in this hymn the gods grant holy light from divine books.

On μερόψ, see *H.* III 1.

vs. 3 ἕλκετ' ἐς ἀθανάτους

On drawing (ἕλκειν) the soul upwards to the divine world, see *H.* III 15.

vs. 3 σκότιον κευθμῶνα λιπούσας

According to Saffrey 1981[b]: 301 this is an explicit allusion to Hesiod *Th.* 158: Ouranos puts his children away 'Γαίης ἐν κευθμῶνι', i.e. in Tartaros. However, an allusion to the Orphic hymn quoted by Proclus *In RP.* II 339, 27 (γαίης ἐς κευθμῶνα) is as likely (in this case too Tartaros is intended). Κευθμών as a synonym for Tartaros is not uncommon in Greek poetry, see L.-S.-J. *s.v.* κευθμών 2. In this case, however, it should be interpreted as the depth of matter, i.e. this material world, not the underworld, cf. Saffrey 1981[b]: 301. The κευθμών of the material world is comparable to 'the depth of matter' in *H.* I 25 (ὕλης νεάτοις βένθεσιν) and *H.* III 3 (βένθος βιότοιο). The darkness (σκότιος) of this world is opposed to the anagogic fire they kindle (vs. 2) and the light they send (vs. 6). For matter as darkness (σκότος), see *In Parm.* IV 862, 10-13.

vs. 4 ὕμνων ἀρρήτοισι καθηραμένας τελετῇσι

Textual matters

The MSS. read either ὑμνέων or ὕμνων with the exception of O ὑμέων, probably a conjecture by Gemistos Plethon (see Vogt 1957[b]: 370f.). The reading ὕμνων is adopted by Cousin 1864[2]: 1320, Meunier 1935: 85, Giordano 1957: 34, Vogt 1957: 30 and 1957[b]: 370-2, and Saffrey 1994: 36. The reading ὑμέων is defended by Westerink 1958: 370 and Saffrey 1981[c]: 299. The related emendation into ὑμῶν by Wakefield is accepted by Wilamowitz 1907: 276 n.1. Of the latter two, the epic ὑμέων is preferable, given Proclus' tendency to imitate Homer. Cf. *Il.* 7, 159 and *Od.* 13, 7: in both cases ὑμέων is the first word of the verse with synizesis, as would be the case here, if the reading is to be adopted.

Wilamowitz, arguing against ὕμνων, oberves that it makes no sense to speak of unspeakable mysteries of hymns ('…aber wer kann sich bei 'unsprechlichen Mysterien' von Gedichten etwas denken?'; cf. Saffrey 1981[b] '…il est absurde de parler des 'initiations indicibles des

hymnes', les hymnes sont faits précisément pour êtres dits.'). However, ἄρρητος does not necessarily mean 'unspeakable' in the sense of 'that what cannot be uttered physically' — as is the point of Wilamowitz and Saffrey — but also 'that what may not be told', 'secret' (cf. L.-S.-J. *s.v.* ἀρρήτος III, 1; Boyancé 1936: 49ff.). See e.g. Proclus' warning in *In RP.* I 205, 22-3 that his teachings about Homer should not be diffused outside the circle of his students: ἐμοὶ μὲν ὄντα ῥητὰ πρὸς ὑμᾶς (Proclus' students), ὑμῖν δὲ ἄρρητα πρὸς τοὺς πολλούς.[10] It is precisely one of the characteristics of mysteries that they are secret.[11]

The argument employed by Vogt 1957b in favour of ὕμνων is that it is the uncontested reading of the MSS. and that it should therefore be maintained provided that it is meaningful.[12] Now is it? In the case of the Orphic hymns there is an evident connection between hymns and τελεταί, as Boyancé notes.[13] West 1983: 26-9 gives a whole catalogue of titles of poems and hymns that had some function in different initiation rites, partly ascribed to Orpheus. Hymns played an important role in the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries too, notably the Homeric Hymn to Demeter.[14] Moreover, Proclus' own extant hymns — whether or not they were actually used in τελεταί — imply that singing these hymns could bring about purification from this bodily existence and the passions involved in it, see e.g. *H.* I 35; II 21; III 10-11; V 15. I will return to this point below. I conclude then that there is no good reason why we should not to follow the manuscript tradition.

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10 Festugière, trans. *In RP.* vol. II 1970: 221 n. 8, points out that this is a *topos*, citing Stob. *Hermet.* frag. XI.4 and Porphyry *ad Marcel.* 281, 17. Anne Sheppard 1980: 33 adds to this Epictetus I 29, 30 and rightly remarks that in this case there is a little more to it: Proclus has just explained that Homeric myths, the topic of the lecture, make dangerous reading for those who read it without preparation.

11 Sheppard 1980: 146 remarks on ἀπόρρητος, more or less synonym to ἀρρήτος, that it is a term commonly applied to the secrets of the mysteries. She refers to an inscription (*SIG* 873, 9) from Eleusis of the 2nd century CE.: τά τε ἀπόρρητα τῆς κατὰ τὰ μυστήρια τελετῆς.

12 Westerink on the contrary argues that ὑμέων is the better reading from a palaeographical point of view. He bases this, however, on the unreliable MS. O, about which see above.

13 Boyancé 1936: 47: 'Et, comme dans le recueil des hymnes, ils appellent τελεταί ces rites si efficaces et peut-être plus spécialement, de même que les hymnes sont dénommés Τελεταί, les formules chantées'.

14 On hymns in Eleusis and at other comparable occassions, see Furley 1995: 29. He remarks that our sources frequently remark *that* hymns were sung, but that, unfortunately, they fail to record the texts of these hymns.

Interpretation
Vogt 1957[b]: 371 suggests that the hymns are the books of the Chaldaean Oracles. This interpretation is rightly rejected by Saffrey 1981[b]: 310 n. 35 because the Chaldaean Oracles are not hymns.

I suggest the following interpretation which takes into account both the idea that hymns can contribute to the purification of the soul, and that this purification leads to philosophical wisdom (σοφία), the central issue in this hymn. Marinus *Vita Procli* § 18 informs us that the philosopher (ὁ φιλόσοφος) Proclus exercised the purificatory virtues (καθαρτικαί) throughout his philosophical life (παρὰ πάντα τὸν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ βίον) as an essential ingredient of it. As part of these exercises, he partook in all kinds of religious festivals, 'as is clear from the contents of his own hymns' (*Vita Procli* § 19 ἡ τῶν ὕμνων αὐτοῦ πραγματεία). By means of practising this virtue, Proclus finally left ordinary thought (φρόνησις) behind him and reached wisdom (σοφία *Vita Procli* § 22). It is, then, precisely as a philosopher, as a student of βίβλοι (vs. 5), that a seeker of wisdom needs ritual purification rites to which he can contribute by composing and singing hymns.

Tr. 5-7: *Hearken, great saviours, and grant me from very divine / books pure light, scattering the mist, so that I know well an immortal god from a man;*

vs. 5 σαωτῆρες μεγάλοι
The title σωτήρ (saviour) is applied to several deities (see Keyßner 1932: 105f. for numerous examples.), although it does not necessarily imply divine status. Humans too may be addressed in this way, especially rulers. Originally, the title refers to a god or a human being capable of saving the bodily existence of the suppliant. Later on, it also refers to spiritual salvation, especially in the context of mystery cults or philosophers, e.g. Epicurus (see Dornseiff *PW* 2. Reihe, fünfter Halbband col. 1211-1221 *s.v.* Σωτήρ).

In Proclus, the word is used both in connection with physical (e.g. *In RP.* I 227, 4ff.) and spiritual well-being (e.g. *In RP.* I 202, 24; *In Alc.* 25, 8; 100, 1). For Proclus, the true salvation is of course spiritual in nature (*Theol. Plat.* I 16, p. 79, 12f.: τῆς ἀληθινῆς σωτηρίας versus apparent goods). It consists in the return of the soul to the metaphysical realm. The agent of the salvation of the soul may be a man (e.g. *In Parm.* I 618, 12: Syrianus is the saviour for men who now live and for those to come hereafter) or a god, as is the case here. The

gods are asked to save Proclus' soul by means of illumination obtained from the study of sacred texts.

In the context of a prayer to the gods of wisdom, we should further note the fact that the triad of the divine qualities of Beauty, Wisdom, Goodness and their corresponding anagogic triad (see commentary to vs. 1 σοφίης ἱερῆς οἴηκας) play a special role in the salvation of the human soul. See e.g. *In Alc.* 29, 10-12, 'the divine as a whole is beautiful, wise (σοφόν), and good, as has been said in the *Phaedrus.* The elevation of the soul is towards these, and through these is the salvation for the souls is achieved (διὰ τούτων ἡ σωτηρία ταῖς ψυχαῖς).' According to *Theol. Plat.* I 25, p. 113, 4ff. everything is saved through the anagogic triad (σῴζεται δὲ πάντα διὰ τούτων) because it links everything to the triad of divine qualities.

The title of saviour appears at a strategic place in the hymn. Right at the beginning of the request, the gods are reminded that it is their very nature to save humans, so they are more or less obliged to grant Proclus the same (*da quia hoc dare tuum est*-argumentation, see *Structure*).

For the addition of μέγας as a common way to amplify the title of saviour, see Saffrey 1981[b]: 301.

vs. 5 ζαθέων δ' ἀπὸ βίβλων

According to Saffrey 1981[b] these βίβλοι are the books containing the Chaldaean Oracles. We have argued in the *Introduction* that these include whatever book Proclus considered divinely inspired, also e.g. Homer, Orpheus and Plato. Saffrey 1981[b]: 302 cites *In Tim.* III 132, 1 (αἱ βίβλοι τῶν θεολόγων καὶ τῶν θεουργῶν) in support of his view. However, those books include more than just the books of the theurgists of the Chaldaean Oracles. The *theologoi* and theurgists are not one and the same group, as the contexts shows: the books are said to be full of divine names, including those of Egyptian gods like Osiris. The latter certainly did not figure in the books of Chaldaean Oracles of the theurgists. Saffrey then continues to argue that the βίβλοι in the hymn are the books from which we can learn the hierarchy of the divine world. This, however, holds true not just for the books of the Chaldaean Oracles, but also for e.g. Plato's dialogues, as the *Theologia Platonica* shows.

Saffrey 1981[b]: 309 n. 33 suggests convincingly that Proclus was probably still sensible to the original sense of ζάθεος 'full of gods', i.e. in this case 'inspired by the gods'.

vss. 6-7 νεύσατ' ἐμοὶ φάος ἁγνὸν ἀποσκεδάσαντες ὁμίχλην,
ὄφρα κεν εὖ γνοίην θεὸν ἄμβροτον ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα·

For a discussion of this reminiscence of Homer, see *H.* I 40-1. Saffrey 1981^{b}: 301 suggests that the expression φάος ἁγνόν is a reminiscence of Sophocles *El.* 86 ὦ φάος ἁγνόν (first words of Electra when she enters), cf. *H.* I 40, VII 31. Whether this is the case or not, the adjective stresses the fact that this is special, divine light.

Tr. 8-12: *that a daemon, doing cruel things, may not hold me forever submerged / in the streams of forgetfulness, while I am far away from the blessed ones, that a chilling Penalty may not bind my soul with the fetters of life, / which, fallen into the waves of cold becoming, / does not want to wander all too long.*

vss. 8-12 μηδέ με ληθαίοις ὑπὸ χεύμασιν οὐλοὰ ῥέζων
δαίμων αἰὲν ἔχοι μακάρων ἀπάνευθεν ἐόντα,
μὴ κρυερῆς γενέθλης ἐνὶ κύμασι πεπτωκυῖαν
ψυχὴν οὐκ ἐθέλουσαν ἐμὴν ἐπὶ δηρὸν ἀλᾶσθαι
Ποινή τις κρυόεσσα βίου δεσμοῖσι πεδήσῃ.

These verses describing the horrible fate of the human soul that has fallen into the waters of oblivion, haunted by cruel demons, recall especially the description in *H.* I 28-31. For the human soul fallen into the material world and consequently exposed to forgetfulness (ληθαίοις ὑπὸ χεύμασιν), see *H.* I 32 and *H.* III 6. For the obnoxious daemon (οὐλοὰ ῥέζων δαίμων) that threatens the human soul, see *H.* I 28-29. For the world of matter as a menacing sea (κρυερῆς γενέθλης ἐνὶ κύμασι πεπτωκυῖαν), see *H.* I 30.[15] The soul, like a second Odysseus, wanders (ἀλᾶσθαι) around over the seas of matter, cf. *H.* III 3. The punishment for the soul that did not live in accordance with *Nous* but with the body instead, takes the form of compulsory reincarnation (Ποινή τις κρυόεσσα βίου δεσμοῖσι πεδήσῃ), see commentary to *H.* I 37.

Vogt 1957: 70 refers to Plato *Crat.* 400c1ff. (the famous σῶμα-σῆμα-formula) for the expression βίου δεσμοί. But see also Plato *Ti.* 73b3: the bonds of life (οἱ τοῦ βίου δεσμοί) which tie soul and body together were made fast in the marrow, cf. Proclus *In RP.* II 125, 9ff.: this passage is about the physical relation between soul and body (ἡ

[15] According to De Jong 1952: 16, one can hear the icy waves flop down in vs. 10. I must admit that this sound effect is not entirely evident to me.

φυσική σχέσις). He explains (*In RP.* II, 280, 30ff.) that the circumvallation of the soul with a thick bond (αἱ ψυχαὶ...τὸν παχὺν τοῦτον περιτειχισάμεναι δεσμόν), i.e. *genesis*, leads to 'horrible forgetfulness (λήθη δεινή, cf. vs. 8) and the unendurable cloud (νέφος ἀφόρητον, cf. vs. 6) produced by the thickness of the body.' For the body as a bond, cf. *In Alc.* 257, 5-6, *In Euclid.* 46, 13ff., *In Tim.* III 325, 12f. The oracle in the *Vita Plotini* provides another interesting parallel (22, 24 δεσμὸν ἀνάγκης) with instructive comments by Brisson and Flamand in Brisson, Cherlonneix *et al.* 1992: 578.

On vss. 8-12, see also the remarks by Saffrey 1981ᵇ: 303-304.

Tr. 13-15: *But, gods, leaders towards bright-shining wisdom, / hearken, and reveal to me, while I hurry to the upward leading track, / the secret rites and initiations of the holy words.*

vs. 13 σοφίης ἐριλαμπέος ἡγεμονῆες

Plato *Lys.* 214a1f. says that the poets are 'fathers and guides to us in matters of wisdom' (πατέρες τῆς σοφίας εἰσὶν καὶ ἡγεμόνες). Another possible Platonic text of reference is *Phdr.* 246e4 (the myth of the winged charioteer): the gods lead the souls that belong to them towards the contemplation of the Forms. We note that vss. 14-5 too refer to this myth. This wisdom is 'bright-shining' (ἐριλαμπής, a rare adjective), for it is the 'holy light' that shines from the divine books (vs. 5).

vss. 14-5 ...ἐπειγομένῳ δὲ πρὸς ὑψιφόρητον ἀταρπὸν
ὄργια καὶ τελετὰς ἱερῶν ἀναφαίνετε μύθων

The study of divinely inspired scriptures is an initiation into divine mysteries. It results in an *epopteia* of the intelligible world as described in Plato *Phdr.* (see commentary to *H.* III 4: 2. *The τελεταί as the study of texts*). The phrase ὄργια καὶ τελετὰς is a reference to *Phdr.* 250b8-c1: ἐτελοῦντο τῶν τελετῶν ἣν θέμις λέγειν μακαριωτάτην, ἣν ὠργιάζομεν κτλ.

For the haste (ἐπείγομαι) to reach the divine, see *H.* III 6. The adjective ὑψιφόρητος is attested only here and in Synesius *H.* IV (VI) 36 (σῶν ὀχετῶν ὑψιφορήτων). The adjective means something like 'leading upwards' (Lacombrade 1978: 75; Saffrey 1981ᵇ: 299).[16]

[16] Gruber-Strohm 1991: 103, on the contrary, translate the passage in Synesius 'Quelladern, die aus der Höhe niederführen.'

Saffrey 1981[b]: 305 points to an interesting parallel in the Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 116, 2 (already cited ad *H.* III 6): the souls hurry, naked, upwards towards the heights (γυμνῆτες ἄνω σπεύδουσι πρὸς ὕψος). For the trail of philosophy (ἀταρπός), see *H.* III 13. For μύθοι in the sense of 'words' instead of 'myths', see *H.* III 11.

V. (ΕΙΣ ΛΥΚΙΗΝ ΑΦΡΟΔΙΤΗΝ)[1]

Text

Ὑμνέομεν Λυκίων βασιληίδα, Κουραφροδίτην,
ἧς ποτ’ ἀλεξικάκοιο περιπλήθοντες ἀρωγῆς
πατρίδος ἡμετέρης θεοφράδμονες ἡγεμονῆες
ἱερὸν ἱδρύσαντο κατὰ πτολίεθρον ἄγαλμα,
σύμβολ’ ἔχον νοεροῖο γάμου, νοερῶν ὑμεναίων
Ἡφαίστου πυρόεντος ἰδ’ Οὐρανίης Ἀφροδίτης·
καί ἑ θεὴν ὀνόμηναν Ὀλύμπιον ἧς διὰ κάρτος
πολλάκι μὲν θανάτοιο βροτοφθόρον ἔκφυγον ἰόν,
ἐς δ’ ἀρετὴν ἔχον ὄμμα, τελεσσιγόνων δ’ ἀπὸ λέκτρων
ἔμπεδος ἀγλαόμητις ἀνασταχύεσκε γενέθλη,
πάντῃ δ’ ἠπιόδωρος ἔην βιότοιο γαλήνη.

ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡμετέρην ὑποδέχνυσο, πότνα, θυηλὴν
εὐεπίης· Λυκίων γὰρ ἀφ’ αἵματός εἰμι καὶ αὐτός.
ψυχὴν δ’ ἂψ ἀνάειρον ἀπ’ αἴσχεος ἐς πολὺ κάλλος,
γηγενέος προφυγοῦσαν ὀλοίιον οἶστρον ἐρωῆς.

Departures from ed. Vogt: 6 οὐρανίης; 9 ὄμμα· τελεσσιγόνων

Translation

We sing a hymn to the queen of the Lycians, Kouraphrodite.
Once, very full of her evil-repelling help,
the leaders of our country, under divine inspiration,
erected a holy statue in the city
with the symbols of the noeric marriage, of the noeric wedding
of the fiery Hephaistos and Aphrodite Ourania;
They also called this goddess Olympian, because of whose power
they often escaped the mortal-destroying poison of death,
they kept their eye fixed on excellence,

[1] For an introduction on Aphrodite, see the *Introduction* to *H.* II.

a firm, bright-minded race sprout up from the birth-achieving beds,
theirs was in every way a calm, bountiful life.

But do now accept our sacrifice of eloquence too,
for I myself am also of Lycian blood.
And lift up my soul from ugliness back again to great beauty,
while fleeing the deadly goad of earth-born desire.

Structure

After a short invocation (vs. 1) follows the aretology (vss. 2-11). It commemorates the assistance of the Lycian Aphrodite to the city of Xanthos in the past. By way of thanks the Lycians erected a statue of her. The aretology ends in an enumeration of good things the Lycians have obtained through the power of Aphrodite (vss. 8-11). Since it is a continuous sequence, structured by μὲν … δὲ… δὲ … δὲ, it is preferable to change the semicolon of vs. 9 in Vogt's edition into a comma. The hymn ends in a request for divine assistance on the spiritual path to salvation by Proclus (vss. 12-15).

Commentary

Tr. 1: *We sing a hymn to the queen of the Lycians, Kouraphrodite.*

vs. 1 Ὑμνέομεν Λυκίων βασιληίδα, Κουραφροδίτην
From the outset of the hymn, it is made clear that the Aphrodite (Κουραφροδίτη) invoked is the patron deity of Lycia (Λυκίων βασιληίδα), Proclus' fatherland (vs. 3 πατρίδος ἡμετέρης). Wilamowitz 1907: 274 concludes from the fact that the name Κουραφροδίτη is not found in Greek literature that this is a local cult-name. However, Proclus may just as well have taken his inspiration from *Il.* 20, 105 Διὸς κούρης Ἀφροδίης (also end of verse). For Aphrodite as a *kora*, see *Orphic Hymn* 57 (To Chtonic Hermes) 4: Παφίης κούρης, ἑλικοβλεφάρου Ἀφροδίτης. I suggest that the name refers either to the fact that Aphrodite as a goddess does not age, or to the fact that she assists *korai* (i.e. brides) during wedding ceremonies.[2]

[2] For eternal youth as a quality of the gods and especially of Aphrodite, see

We know nothing about the cult of the Lycian Aphrodite. The Lycian Aphrodite in *Orphic Hymn* 55, 11 is the product of an unnecessary emendation by Abel of λύκαινα into λύκειη (rightly rejected by subsequent editors). As for Xanthos (vs. 4 the πτολίεθρον where the statue was erected), the paternal gods of the city seem to have been Leto, Apollo and Artemis. A round basis or altar found in Xanthos bears the inscription ΑΦΡΟΔΕΙΤΗ ΕΠΗΚΟΩ, 'to Aphrodite Who Gives Ear' (Demargne/Metzger 1967: 1404).

For ὑμνέομεν as the first word of a hymn, see my commentary to *H.* II 1.

Tr. 2-4: *Once, very full of her evil-repelling help, / the leaders of our country, under divine inspiration, / erected a holy statue in the city …*

vs. 2 ποτ' ἀλεξικάκοιο περιπλήθοντες ἀρωγῆς
Proclus is vague about both the time (ποτ') and the occasion of the dedication. He does not so much hint at a specific case of Aphrodite's evil-averting assistance (ἀλεξικάκος ἀρωγή); rather the magistrates showed themselves grateful for her continuous support (vs. 8 πολλάκι).

vs. 3 πατρίδος ἡμετέρης
Proclus' parents were both Lycians of high birth. Proclus himself was born in Byzantium. However, soon afterwards, 'his parents took him to their fatherland Xanthos, which was sacred to Apollo, and which thus, by some divine lot, became his native land also (πατρίδα αὐτοῦ)' (Marinus *Vita Procli* § 8).[3] The fact that Proclus in this manner is a native of Lycia implies a bond of *sympatheia* between him and the Lycian Aphrodite that underlies the efficiency of the prayer, see commentary to vs. 13.

vs. 3 θεοφράδμονες ἡγεμονῆες
From the classical period onwards, magistrates, especially at the end of their period in office, often dedicated votive inscriptions and

Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 429. For Aphrodite assisting *korai*, see Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 421-426.

[3] The return from the capital Byzantium to the province was perhaps the result of the growing hostility towards pagans at the imperial court instigated by Pulcheria, the elder sister of Theodosius II (cf. Siorvanes 1996: 2-3).

statues to Aphrodite. This Aphrodite is sometimes called *Hêgemonê*, see e.g. the altar inscribed Ἀφροδίτῃ ἡγεμόνῃ τοῦ δήμου καὶ Χάρισιν which was erected by the *bouleutai* of Athens at the end of the third century BCE. The magistrates were responsible for maintaining concord in the state. Aphrodite is the goddess of the divine Love uniting and bringing together opposite forces not just in nature (for which see my commentary to vss. 5-6) but also in human society while engendering concord, harmony and peace. When the magistrates had been successful in doing so during their term in office, they had reason to thank the Aphrodite as the patron deity of concord and harmony.[4] That the Lycian statue was another example of such a dedication is suggested by the fact that it was the Lycian leaders (ἡγεμονῆες) who erected it. The fact that they worshipped her as Aphrodite Olympios corroborates this suggestion (see commentary to vs. 7 καί ἑ θεὴν ὀνόμηναν Ὀλύμπιον).

The leaders are considered as divinely inspired (θεοφράδμονες). According to Neoplatonic doctrine, good rule in general requires divine inspiration.[5] In this particular case, the adjective seems to indicate that the very decision to erect a statue was the result of divine inspiration. An inscription from Erythrai (ca. 400 BCE) refers to a similar event. On the instigation of an oracle, the city has decided to erect a statue (ἄγαλμα) and a temple in honour of Aphrodite for the preservation of the people of Erythrai (ἐπὶ σωτηρίηι τοῦ δήμου τοῦ Ἐρυθραίων).[6] Proclus intends to contrast these divinely inspired magistrates of old to the 'atheist' — i.e. Christian — rulers of his own day who remove the statues of the gods from their temples.[7] The best known example of this is the removal of the *agalma* of Athena from the Parthenon 'by those who move what should not be moved' (Marinus *Vita Procli* § 30).

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[4] On this custom which is well attested by means of numerous inscriptions, see Sokolowski 1964 and Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 403-408, 446-450 and p. 39 for the Athenian altar.

[5] Proclus *In Alc.* 182, 12ff. explains that individual men have only a small portion of *Nous*. Hence they gather in order to deliberate on the common good. In this way they join their sparks in one light. Hence tradition considers these gatherings as holy, for they are divinely inspired (*In Alc.* 183, 20 ἔνθεον).

[6] For the text of the fragmentary inscription, see *SEG* XXXVI (1986) p. 308, nr. 1039; for a discussion, see Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 449.

[7] For Christians as atheists who move what should not be moved, see Saffrey 1975.

vs. 4 ἱερὸν … ἄγαλμα

It is not clear what the *agalma* looked like. Demargne/Metziger 1967: 1406 speak of a statue ('heiliges Standbild') depicting Aphrodite and Hephaistos. According to Saffrey 1994: 39 'Proclus avait vu une image (peut-être un bas-relief) représentant le marriage d'Aphrodite avec Héphaistos.' To my mind, Hephaistos was probably not depicted. Proclus says that Aphrodite was depicted with the symbols of her marriage to Hephaistos, *not* with Hephaistos himself (vss. 5-6). Such an *agalma* representing both Hephaistos and Aphrodite, would have been unique. There is actually no undisputed example of the two together in Greek art whatsoever.[8]

The *agalma* is called 'holy' (ἱερός). This indicates that it was not a piece of decorative sculpture (like a bas-relief), but a cultic statue representing the deity and its protective powers. Such a statue deserved worship in order to guarantee the enduring benevolence of the deity, just as its removal implied the end of the divine protection.[9] Theurgy gave a new dimension to this old belief. Hermeias *In Phdr.* 99, 14-16 writes about 'human and merely technical theurgy such as priests also use in the cults of statues (περὶ τὰς θεραπείας τῶν ἀγαλμάτων) by the law of the city and according to their native customs.' This technical theurgy is the lowest sort of theurgy in Sheppard's triple division (see chapter IV § 4.3).[10] It is not likely these rites were intended as theurgical rites. Rather, Hermeias interprets existing religious practice in theurgical terms.[11] The fact that the statue is said to hold *symbola* is an indication that Proclus interprets this statue as part of theurgical practices, for *symbola* are the essential ingredient in theurgy (see commentary to vs. 5 σύμβολ' ἔχον).

vs. 4 κατὰ πτολίεθρον

Probably Xanthos, the capital of Lycia, where Proclus spent his childhood, cf. commentary to vs. 3 πατρίδος ἡμετέρης.[12] For a description of Xanthos, see Demargne/Metzger 1967: 1375ff.

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[8] Cf. R. Fleischer in the *LIMC* (Zürich/München 1984) II, 1 p. 126f.

[9] As may be illustrated by Proclus' horror at the removal of the statue of Athena (see commentary to vs. 3 θεοφράδμονες ἡγεμονῆες).

[10] See Sheppard 1982: 218 on this passage from Hermeias.

[11] As e.g. Iamblichus does in the case of offerings (*Myst.* V 9) and Proclus in the case of prayers (see chapter V § 2).

[12] Cf. Demargne/Metzger 1967: 1406 'zweifellos in Xanthos.'

Tr. 5-6: *(a statue) with the symbols of the noeric marriage, / of the noeric wedding of the fiery Hephaistos and Aphrodite Ourania;*

vs. 5 σύμβολ' ἔχον

Symbola can be a different things, ranging from material objects like specific plants, stones and animals, to myths.[13] Here mythical symbolism is intended. Whatever the symbols may have been — Proclus does not give any clue — they are supposed to refer to the mythological wedding of Aphrodite to Hephaistos. Proclus believed that this story hinted at a higher, concealed truth (see commentary to vs. 5 νοεροῖο γάμου, νοέρῶν ὑμεναίων).

It will be observed that in our discussion of mythological symbolism, the reference was to texts, be it spoken or written. Statues were considered as texts in another format. Their allegorical interpretation was a common phenomenon, both in Chaldaean circles (for which see Lewy 1978[2]: 361ff.) and among the Neoplatonists. A notable example in the latter category is Porphyry's *On Statues*. Some theologians, according to Porphyry, can read from statues things concerning the gods as if they were books. The unlearned on the contrary, regard the statues as pieces of wood and stone in the same way as they would regard the written letters on monuments, on tablets and in books as mere stones, pieces of wood and papyrus (Porphyry *On Statues* 351F. ed. Smith).[14]

What exactly this statue was supposed to accomplish by means of its *symbola* remains obscure. As has been explained, symbolical texts could work in different ways. First, the study of symbolic myths was supposed to yield divinely inspired wisdom, surpassing mere human knowledge (see chapter VI § 2.2). Furthermore, the right use of symbolic myth could help to accomplish something similar to which the myth referred (see chapter V § 3.3.2). In this case we may perhaps imagine the following: the myth refers to the fact that Aphrodite is the cause of beauty in the material world in general (for which see below). To worship a statue representing this story may result in an existence that is as full of beauty as possible in the material realm, e.g. because of excellence and a fine offspring (vss. 9-10).

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13 See chapter IV § 4.4 for material *symbola*, and chapter V § 3.3 for myths as *symbola*.

14 It should be added that Porphyry does not connect these symbolical interpretations to a theory of theurgy.

vs. 5 νοεροῖο γάμου, νοερῶν ὑμεναίων

The marriage between the ugly Hephaistos and the beautiful Aphrodite is first attested in *Od.* 8, 266ff., which tells the story of Aphrodite's adultery with Ares, see also e.g. Apollonius Rhodius 3, 36-40, Nonnus *D.* 29, 328-332. It is one of the stories for which Plato expels the poets out of his ideal city (*R.* 390c6-7), and which Proclus subsequently interprets symbolically in order to save Homer from Plato's criticism (see chapter VI § 2). For Proclus, the relations of Aphrodite with both Hephaistos and Ares refer to the process of causation in the material cosmos. Hephaistos is the demiurge of the material things, Ares guarantees the existence of opposites in the universe. They both co-operate with Aphrodite. On the works of Hephaistos she confers beauty (κάλλος, cf. vs. 14 where Aphrodite is explicitly linked to beauty), in the case of Ares she causes harmony and order between opposites. Hephaistos is superior to Ares. The relation of Aphrodite and Hephaistos is therefore more important than that of Aphrodite with Ares. For that reason the myth presents Aphrodite as being married to Hephaistos in accordance with the wish of Zeus, whereas she commits adultery with Ares. For this interpretation, see Proclus *In RP.* I 141, 1-143, 16, cf. *In Tim.* I 333, 2-4; II 27, 16-28, 7.

The interpretation of the marriage of Aphrodite with Hephaistos as two collaborating principles of causation does not stand on its own. As a rule Proclus interprets all so-called holy marriages that way:

> These links we may call, in philosophical language, interweavings; but the theologians speak of them as 'sacred marriages' and of the entities generated in common by them as 'offspring' (*In Parm.* II 779, 19-21; trans. Morrow/Dillon 1987: 142).[15]

For 'holy marriages', see further Proclus *In Tim.* I 49, 12-16 with Festugière's note to his translation (vol. I, p. 82, n. 2), *In Crat.* § 146 p. 83, 1-6, *Theol. Plat.* V 1, p. 9, 3-8, and Brisson, Cherlonneix *et al.* 1992: 266-267 for the concept of sacred marriages in Plato and its subsequent development in the Platonic tradition.

The marriage of Aphrodite and Hephaistos is called 'noeric' (νοεροῖο/νοέρῶν) to indicate that we have to interpret this marriage as referring to a higher reality, cf. Proclus *In RP* I 82, 18-20: the tragic and fictitious stories of myths refer to a noeric contemplation of the classes of the gods' (τὴν νοὲραν τῶν θείων γενῶν θεωρίαν).

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[15] καὶ ταῦτα φιλοσόφως μὲν διαπλοκὰς ὀνομάσεις, θεολογικῶς δὲ γάμους ἱεροὺς, καὶ τὰς κοινὰς αὐτῶν ἀπογεννήσεις τόκους·

vs. 6 Ἡφαίστου πυρόεντος

Hephaistos, the smith among the gods, uses fire for his craft, see e.g. *Il.* 18, 468ff. (Hephaistos fabricates Achilles' new armour). He is thus traditionally associated with fire (cf. the Homeric expression *Il.* 9, 468 φλὸξ Ἡφαίστοιο) and sometimes even called so, see e.g. Proclus *In Crat.* § 85 p. 41, 15-6, cf. *Orphic Hymn* 66 (To Hephaistos) 1. The expression returns (always first words of the verse) in Nonnus *D.* 2, 299; 10, 300; 27, 111; 29, 348.

In Proclus' symbolical interpretation of the marriage of Aphrodite and Hephaistos (see above), Hephaistos the smith is a demiurgic power[16] and fire is his instrument by means of which the material substrate of the living beings is put into motion and made life-producing.[17]

vs. 6 Οὐρανίης Ἀφροδίτης·

Ourania is a frequent epithet of Aphrodite in Greek cult.[18] For that reason I choose to capitalize it (*pace* Vogt).

Plato *Smp.* 180c1ff. (speech by Pausanias) famously distinguishes Aphrodite Ourania, the motherless child of Ouranos, from Aphrodite Pandemos, the child of Zeus and Dione. In Plato, the latter has a bad reputation: she is associated with the cheap love of short-lived sexual relations. The former represents noble love. This distinction between a good Aphrodite Ourania and a bad Aphrodite Pandemos proved influential.[19] However, this influence was not all-pervasive. There are numerous examples of Aphrodite Pandemos as a respectable deity protecting the people of a city, not associated with sexual licentiousness.[20]

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16 *In Tim.* I 142, 20ff.: ὅτι μὲν οὖν τῆς δημιουργικῆς ἐστι σειρᾶς, ... δηλουσιν οἱ Θεολόγοι χαλκεύοντά τε αὐτον καὶ κινοῦντα τὰς φύσας καὶ ὅλως ἐργοτεχνίτην παραδιδόντες.

17 *In Tim.* I 144, 3-5: ὄργανον μὲν οὖν Ἡφαίστειόν ἐστι τὸ πῦρ, ὕλη δὲ ἡ γῆ διὰ τοῦ πυρὸς κινουμένη καὶ ζῳογονοῦσα, καθ' ἑαυτὴν ἀπεψυγμένη.

18 For an inventory of the places where Aphrodite Ourania was worshipped in Greece, see the minute study by Pirenne-Delforge 1994. The observation by Nilsson 1955: 20 that this epithet ist 'höchst auffällig' because no other god bears it apart from one of the Muses, is incorrect (e.g. Pi. *Fr.* 30,1 ed. Maehler of Themis, Hdt. 6, 56 of Zeus, E. *Hipp.* 59f. of Artemis).

19 Pirenne-Delforge 1988: 145-148 lists e.g. Theocritus *Epigram* 13, 1 ed. Gow; Artemidorus II, 37; Lucian *Am.* 37; Pausanias IX 16, 3-4; Himerius apud Photium *Bibl.* 372b.

20 For the occurrence of titles Ourania and Pandemos in Greek cult and the Platonic interpretation interpretation of them, see Pirenne-Delforge 1988.

Proclus' reception of the Platonic passage is interesting. He nowhere mentions Aphrodite Pandemos. Instead, he speaks of a *pandemos* lover only. Such a lover is a bad receiver of the good illumination of Love and subsequently gives himself over to a licentious life (*In Alc.* 34, 12-35, 6). He dissociates this *pandemos* love from Aphrodite the daughter of Zeus and Dione. According to the discussion in *In Crat.* § 183, pp. 109, 22-111, 20, she is no longer a disreputable deity, but a demiurgic force who binds the things in the cosmos together (cf. commentary to vs. 5 νοεροῖο γάμου, νοέρῶν ὑμεναίων). Aphrodite the daughter of Ouranos, on the other hand, is the patron of undefiled life, who separates the soul from the world of becoming and leads it up to the noetic Beauty. They are two aspects of the same principle, for they are unified with each other in respect of the sameness of their hypostasis. This move to dissociate Aphrodite Dionaia (Διωναία), as he calls her, from the epithet Pandemos is probably prompted by Proclus' unwillingness to ascribe anything bad to the gods.

In the light of the discussion of the passage from *In Cratylum*, it seems a bit odd that Proclus here invokes Aphrodite as Ourania, given the fact that he refers to Aphrodite as a demiurgic force, thus to Aphrodite Dionaia. Perhaps Proclus does not necessarily take the epithet Ourania to refer to the daughter of Ouranos, but to the divine dwelling-place, the *ouranos* (cf. *H.* II 15), like the adjective Olympic does in the next verse. In this context, it is perhaps telling that nowhere else does Proclus call Aphrodite by her epithet Ourania, not even in the above mentioned *In Crat.*-passage. On the other hand, the Lycian Aphrodite has not only demiurgic qualities. In vss. 14-15 she is invoked as the source of anagogic Love. It is possible that since in this hymn both Aphrodites fuse, the epithet of the daughter of Ouranos is transposed to Aphrodite Dionaia. This fusion is facilitated by the fact that they share the same hypostasis.

Tr. 7-8: *They also called this goddess 'Olympian', because of whose power / they often escaped the mortal-destroying poison of death, …*

vs. 7 καί ἑ θεὴν ὀνόμηναν Ὀλύμπιον

The gods live on Mt. Olympos, hence they are often called Olympians (e.g. *Il.* 1, 399). For Proclus, the Olympos is not so much the top of a mountain as a symbol of the intelligible realm as opposed to the world of matter, see *H.* VII 35-6.

This epithet is hardly ever attested in connection with Aphrodite. This hymn thus provides some interesting information concerning the worship of Aphrodite Olympios. There are just two other known instances of Aphrodite Olympios. From Tegea comes a herm with a female head (second or first century BCE) dedicated to Aphrodite Olympios.[21] Pausanias III 12, 11 mentions a circular building in Sparta containing statues of Zeus Olympios and Aphrodite Olympios.[22] Excavations have revealed the remains of this building, which is dated around 600 BCE. It was situated at the so-called Σκιάς, the place where the Spartans held their assembles. Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 196-7 supposes that the worship of these gods as Olympians at this particular place was related to the political activities that went on there. If she is right, this unusual epithet in connection with Aphrodite adds further weight to the suggestion that the statue set up by the Lycian leaders celebrated Aphrodite as the patron of social harmony (see commentary to vs. 3 θεοφράδμονες ἡγεμονῆες).

vs. 8 πολλάκι μὲν θανάτοιο βροτοφθόρον ἔκφυγον ἰόν

Aphrodite has often saved the lives of Proclus' ancestors, as one may expect from a patron deity of a city. The ἰός they escaped can be two things: either an arrow (scholion βέλος; Giordano 1957: 39 dardo della morte) or poison (Saffrey 1994: 41 poison de la mort). Both interpretations make sense. Ever since *Il.* 1, 48 (μετὰ δ' ἰὸν ἕηκεν) where Apollo strikes the Greeks with a plague by means of his arrows, divine arrows signify sudden death for men, generally from disease (Kirk 1985: 58). The dangers that the Lycians escaped are not specified. They can have been anything ranging from war to famine to plagues. On the other hand, Proclus seems to use ἰός and it derivatives in the sense of 'poison' only: *Dec. Dub.* 61, 4ff. (συναπογεννᾶται ταῖς ἐχίδναις ὁ ἰός), *In RP.* II 75, 16f. (τινα ζωὴν ἄυλον καὶ ἄχραντον ... ἰοῦ καὶ σήψεως); *Decem. Dub.* 42, 22, *In RP.* II 322, 19: ἰοβόλα (venomous animals); *H.* I, 41 ἰολόχευτος (born of venom). I therefore opt for the latter interpretation.

As discussed above (see commentary to vs. 4 ἱερὸν ... ἄγαλμα), Proclus did probably understand the statue as part of theurgical

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[21] Pirenni-Delforge 1994: 272, Nilsson 1955: 207 n.1.

[22] See the discussion by Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 196-7 and Hitzig/Bluemner 1899: 778 who observe: 'Während bei Zeus der Beinahme sehr haüfig ist, wird Aphrodite als die himmlische sonst immer Urania genannt, noch in Xanthos nach Procl. Hymn. V.'

rituals. Such rituals could indeed save cities. Marinus *Vita Procli* § 28 reports that Proclus himself caused rain-falls in order to save Athens from a severe drought and also proposed means to prevent earthquakes because of his theurgical knowledge.

Tr. 9-11: ... *they kept their eye fixed on excellence, a / firm, bright-minded, race sprout up from the birth-achieving beds, / theirs was in every way a calm, bountiful life.*

vs. 9 ἐς δ' ἀρετὴν ἔχον ὄμμα
Translations vary: Meunier 1935: 93 'leur regard était porté sur la vertue'; Giordano 1957: 39 'ed avevano l'occhio alla virtù; Saffrey 1994: 41 'alors qu'ils visaient à la gloire.' The original denotation of ἀρετή is 'manliness', a notion covering everything that is admired in a man. Since in archaic culture a man's qualities are literally non-existent as long as they are not recognized by others, 'glory' and ἀρετή may coincide (Pfeijffer 1996: 133-135). From manly qualities ἀρετή becomes excellence as such. In a pregnant sense it is moral excellence, hence virtue.

The Neoplatonic scale of virtues includes moral excellence, but also e.g. physical excellence, as Marinus *Vita Procli* illustrates. This biography, if not hagiography, of Proclus is modelled after the Neoplatonic *scala virtutum.*[23] Marinus starts with the physical *aretai* of Proclus. He was endowed with exceptional sight and hearing, bodily strength, physical beauty and health (*Vita Procli* § 2). In ascending order, this form of excellence is followed by ethical (ἠθικαί), social (πολίτικαί), purifying (καθαρτικαί), intellectual (θεωρητικαί), theurgic (θεουργικαί) and superhuman (ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἤδη τεταγμένας) *aretai.* About the last category Marinus chooses not to talk. In a somewhat different context, Proclus seems to suggest that this highest form of excellence consists in becoming one, i.e. in becoming god, for — as he explains — the One is God (*In Tim.* II 111, 20).

Proclus does not seem to have a certain type of excellence in mind here. Aphrodite inspires people with a love for what is beautiful and good. This includes both fame and virtue. Hence the translation 'excellence' is preferable.

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[23] On the *Vita Procli* as a *scala virtutum,* see Blumenthal 1984 .

vss. 9-10 … τελεσσιγόνων δ' ἀπὸ λέκτρων
ἔμπεδος ἀγλαόμητις ἀνασταχύεσκε γενέθλη,

One of Aphrodite's traditional domains is birth and procreation, cf. *H.* II, 10-12. The Lycian offspring is said to be ἀγλαόμητις (having shining wisdom). In Homer and afterwards μῆτις is associated with cunning cleverness, see expressions like πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς in Homer and Pi. *I.* 3/4, 65 μῆτιν ἀλώπηξ (a fox when it comes to cleverness). Proclus, however, associates it explicitly with philosophical wisdom. Athena as the god of Philosophy is called Mêtis by the gods (*In Tim.* I 168, 8ff.). The intellect in the soul is considered as a product of the divine Mêtis, which together with *aporia* produces the desire (*eros*) to search for perfect knowledge.[24]

The adjective τελεσσιγόνος (achieving birth) is typical for late epic Greek. It is only attested here, seventeen times in Nonnus, where it is e.g. said of a marriage (*D.* 1, 398 and different deities, like Semele (*D.* 8, 198; 9,4) and Gaia (*D.* 27, 317). It occurs once in *Orphic Hymn* 53, 10, in the sense of 'ripe' as said of fruit (εὐιέροις καρποῖσι τελεσσιγόνοισι).

vs. 11 πάντῃ δ' ἠπιόδωρος ἔην βιότοιο γαλήνη

The comparison of life to a sea voyage is exceedingly common in Greek literature. Life, hard as it often can be, presents itself most of the time as a dangerous, stormy sea. For the image of a troublesome life as heavy seas, see e.g. *In Tim.* I 56, 28-57, 2 (with reference to Stoic sources for the origin of the image) and *Dec. Dub.* 34, 9ff. For this image, as well as its opposite (calm weather), in early Greek poetry, see Steiner 1986: 66-70.

Proclus' ancestors, on the contrary, enjoyed a calm sea (γαλήνη), i.e. a smooth passage through a rich (ἠπιόδωρος) life. For γαλήνη as a life free of troubles, see e.g. Julian the Egyptian *Anthologia Graeca* 9, 445, 3 (ἐν βιότοιο γαλήνῃ), Damascius *Vita Isid.* Fr. 265 (p. 213): the rich bequeathed their fortunes to the Academy which granted its members the σχολή and γαλήνη necessary for the philosophical life. Since philosophy prospers in such a calm and wealthy existence, Proclus prays for it in his hymns (see *H.* VII 47, cf. *H.* VI 4-5) as does Synesius (*H.* V (II) 79-80: κατάχει χάριν λιπῶσαν | βιοτᾶς γαληνιώσας).

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[24] See Proclus' interpretation of Plato *Symp.* 203b1-c6 (how Penia got pregnant of Eros) as developped in *In Alc.* 236, 6ff.

As we have noted above, Proclus seems to interpret the statue of Aphrodite as part of theurgical rites as practised for the benefit of the city. Hermeias *In Phdr.* 96, 6ff. says of external theurgy,[25] using the nautical metaphor: (Theurgy) 'by freeing our soul and body and external possessions from troubling difficulties, furnishes us with a smooth and happy passage through life (εὔροιαν καὶ εὐδαιμονίαν κατὰ τὸν βίον).'

Tr. 12-13: *But do now accept our sacrifice of eloquence too, / for I myself am also of Lycian blood.*

vss. 12-13 καὶ ἡμετέρην ὑποδέχνυσο, πότνα, θυηλὴν εὐεπίης
Proclus prays that Aphrodite may accept (ὑποδέχνυσο) his offering too (καί), just as she did in case of the statue dedicated by Proclus' ancestors. Cf. *H.* VII 5 for a similar phrase. The idea that a hymn is an offering recurs in Synesius *H.* I (III) 10-11, who describes his hymn as a 'bloodless offering, a libation of words' (ἐπέων λοιβάς), for a discussion see Vollenweider 1984: 40 and the reaction by Erler 1989: 108. For the same idea, cf. e.g. Pindar Fr. 86a ed. Snell-Maehler, Callimachus Fr. 494 ed. Pfeiffer.

vs. 13 Λυκίων γὰρ ἀφ' αἵματός εἰμι καὶ αὐτός
The Lycian Aphrodite should help Proclus just as she assisted Proclus' ancestors, for (γάρ) he is a Lycian too and therefore there is a bond of *sympatheia* between the goddess of the Lycians, and Proclus the Lycian. For this sort of *sympatheia*, see chapter V § 3.2.

On Proclus' Lycian background, cf. commentary on vs. 3 πατρίδος ἡμετέρης. Proclus celebrated his Lycian background in the epitaph he composed for himself: Πρόκλος ἐγὼ γενόμενον Λύκιος γένος (*Ep.* 1, 1 ed. Vogt).

Tr. 14-15: *And lift up my soul from the ugliness back again to the very beautiful, / while it flees the deadly goad of earth-born desire.*

vs. 14 ψυχὴν δ' ἂψ ἀνάειρον ἀπ' αἴσχεος ἐς πολὺ κάλλος
Aphrodite the Goddess of Love, leads the soul up towards noetic Beauty (ἐς πολὺ κάλλος), away from the material realm (ἀπ' αἴσχεος). Cf. Plato *Symp.* 201a9f.: love is always for what is beautiful, never for

[25] External theurgy is the lowest kind of theurgy comparable to white magic, see chapter IV § 4.3.

what is ugly (καὶ εἰ τοῦτο οὕτως ἔχει, ἄλλο τι ὁ Ἔρως κάλλους ἂν εἴη ἔρως, αἴσχους δὲ οὔ;).

Just as the divine world is characterized by Beauty, so is its opposite, the material realm, by ugliness (αἶσχος), see e.g. *In Parm.* IV 855, 21-3 (Ὡς γὰρ ἡ ὕλη καλοῦ μετέσχε διὰ τὸ εἶδος, οὕτω τὸ εἶδος αἴσχους ἀνεπλήσθη διὰ τὴν ὕλην· αὕτη γὰρ αἰσχρὰ καὶ ἀκαλλής); *In Tim.* I 175, 9f. (αὕτη (sc. ὕλη) γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἀπειρία καὶ τὸ αἶσχος...). Ugliness is defined as unlimited in a negative sense.[26] Matter, being unlimited because of the indeterminacy of its essence,[27] is thus ugliness par excellence.

vs. 15 γηγενέος προφυγοῦσαν ὀλοίιον οἶστρον ἐρωῆς

For the prayer not to fall victim to bad desires, see commentary to *H.* II 21.

Οἶστρος is a vehement maddening goad of desire. In Plato it is e.g. said of the lover who yearns for his beloved (*Phdr.* 240d1) and of the man whose soul is ruled by its lowest part (*R.* 577e2). In Proclus it is the passion for things in the material realm: hence it is earth-born (γηγενής: cf. Plato *Pol.* 271a5, cited by Proclus *Theol. Plat.* V 7, p. 27, 3f.). The souls that fall in love with the material realm subsequently forget about the intelligible realm. Proclus considers this condition of oblivion as the death of the soul (e.g. *Mal. Subsist.* 22, 10 'mors enter'). Hence the adjective ὀλοίιος (deathly). For an expression of the same idea, see *Theol. Plat.* V 24, p. 87, 24ff.: the gods stimulate our faculties to think and contemplate the Forms, in order that the soul 'is not destroyed (ἀπόληται), 'submerged in the passions of the earth (βαπτισθεῖσα χθονὸς οἴστροις) and the necessities of Nature', as one of the gods says (Chaldaean Oracle Fr. 114).' In *In Alc.* 98, 14, Proclus describes the common lovers as 'the lovers because of lust and the goad of it' (οἱ διὰ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν καὶ τὸν ταύτης οἶστρον ἐρασταί·). The divine lover, on the contrary, who has a *sympatheia* towards intelligible Beauty, has mastered the earth-born and chthonic way of life (γηγενῶν καὶ χθονίων ἐπιτηδευμάτων).

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[26] Proclus distinguishes between unlimited *qua* power and unlimited *qua* number or size. Real being is unlimited in the first (positive) sense, matter in the negative one. For the two sorts of infinitude, see *El.* § 86, pp. 78, 19-80, 14.

[27] For matter being infinite and thus indeterminate, see e.g. *El.* § 94, p. 84, 21-22.

VI. (ΥΜΝΟΣ ΚΟΙΝΟΣ ΘΕΩΝ ΜΗΤΡΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΚΑΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΙΑΝΟΥ)

Introduction

1. *How many gods?*

1.1 *Introduction*

How many gods are honoured in this hymn: two or three? All interpreters are unanimously convinced that there are two deities: Hecate and Ianus-Zeus. For this reason the hymn is traditionally known as the ΥΜΝΟΣ ΚΟΙΝΟΣ ΕΚΑΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΙΑΝΟΥ. However, the hymn may perhaps involve three gods: the Mother of the Gods (vs. 1), Hecate (vs. 2), and Ianus-Zeus. This question does not come to the fore as long as it is supposed that the Mother of the Gods is identical with Hecate. But is she? As will be argued below, the Mother of the Gods belongs — to Proclus' mind at least — to the level of Nous. Hecate on the other hand is presented in the *Theologia Platonica* as a product of the former on the level of the hypercosmic gods (see chapter III §2.2, *Figure* 1). In that case, we would have two different goddesses. Then again, there is the possibility that the Mother of the Gods can also be called Hecate, be it Hecate on the level of Nous, just as e.g. Zeus appears at different levels of reality. Before we can make up our mind, then, we should examine the nature of the Mother of the Gods and Hecate in greater detail. This is all the more necessary since most discussions of Hecate, the most prominent deity in theurgy, make a terrible mess of things by assuming that there is just one Hecate and that this Hecate is the World Soul.[1] As I will argue below, in the Neoplatonic interpretation of Hecate at least, there are two Hecates, neither of them being the World Soul.[2]

1.2 *Rhea-Hecate, the Mother of the Gods*

We start our examination of the nature of Hecate with the Neoplatonic exegesis of Chaldaean Oracles Frr. 6 and 50. According to

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[1] The notable exception is Brisson 2000: 145f. and 151.

[2] For an attempt to prove that Hecate can be equated with the World Soul, see Sarah Johnston 1990: 153-163. Much of her argument is based on Chaldaean Oracles Frr. 51 and 52. As will be shown below, Proclus believes that these oracles show that Hecate is the cause of soul, not that Hecate is soul herself.

Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 6, there is 'a girdle, a noeric membrane' (ὑπεζωκώς τις ὑμὴν νοερός) between the two Fires, i.e. the first hidden Intellect and the demiurgic Intellect. According to Fr. 50, it is Hecate who holds the middle position (μέσσον Ἑκάτης κέντρον) between these two Intellects or Fathers. It is therefore generally agreed that this membrane is Hecate (see e.g. Majercik 1989: 143f.; Johnston 1990: 53f.; Des Places 1996^3: 124f. n. 1 to Fr. 6; Brisson 2000: 147 n. 93).

In the theology of the Neoplatonic school of Athens, these two Intellects are Kronos, the pure Intellect, and Zeus, the Demiurgical Intellect. Kronos, the middle goddess, and Zeus constitute the triad of Nous (see chapter III § 2.2, *Figure* 1). Damascius does indeed call the divine power between these two Hecate, see e.g. *De Princip.* III p. 158, 3ff. ed. Westerink-Combès, *In Parm.* vol. I, p. 68, 4-7 ed. Westerink-Combès, vol. I, p. 94, 16-18 ed. Westerink-Combès. In Proclus we lack a clear equation of this middle member of Nous with Hecate. Proclus *In Crat.* § 171, p. 95, 18-23 seems to hint at such an equation. There, however, Proclus discusses gods on the hypercosmic and encosmic levels, not gods on the level of the Intellect. In order to prove that Kronos is the pure Intellect, Proclus *In Crat.* § 107, p. 58, 18ff. cites Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 35, according to which Hecate leaps forth from the Father, interpreted by Proclus as Kronos. Damascius vol. II 133, 2-6 ed. Ruelle cites the same Chaldaean Oracle in a discussion of a certain quality of the noeric triad.

Proclus himself identifies this middle goddess primarily with the Orphic Rhea. Rhea is the Mother of the Gods, see my commentary to vs. 1 θεῶν μῆτερ, cf. Julian VIII (*On the Mother of the Gods*) 159b. In his extant works,[3] the most substantial treatment of Rhea is found in *Theol. Plat.* V 11, pp. 35, 21-39, 24. Rhea is the centre (τὸ μέσον κέντρον) between Kronos and Zeus the Demiurge (*Theol. Plat.* V 11, p. 36, 12-17). Proclus here paraphrases Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 50. Although no mention of Hecate is made, this is another indication that Proclus too, like Damascius, identifies the Orphic Rhea with the Chaldaean Hecate. Together with Kronos, she produces the universal classes of gods, including Zeus the Demiurge. For this reason, she is celebrated as the Mother of Zeus (*Theol. Plat.* V 11, p. 35, 25f., p. 36, 22). Together with him she produces all classes of gods, both the hypercosmic gods and the encosmic gods (*Theol. Plat.* V 11, p. 38, 1-26). She is truly the Mother of the Gods. In short, she is the life-

[3] A book by Proclus on the theology of the Mother of the Gods is lost, see below.

giving source of the universe (*Theol. Plat.* V 11, p. 38, 17f. τὴν τῶν ὅλων ζωογονικὴν αἰτίαν) and is for that reason often called ἡ ζωογόνος Ῥέα (*Theol. Plat.* V 11, p. 36, 8).

Contrary to the general opinion, this Hecate/Rhea cannot be the World Soul, as is already apparent from the place that Proclus assigns to her in the heart of the triad of Nous. The World Soul is an encosmic entity (*In Tim.* II 290, 5) and for that reason inferior to Rhea by far (see chapter III § 2.2, *Figure* 1). Moreover, Proclus *In Tim.* II 129, 22ff. makes Rhea the cause of Soul:

> If Soul cannot be ranked among the first gods, nor among the last, then we should give it a place in the middle. And we would do rightly so, in order that it imitates even its very first causes. For the goddess who is the cause of Soul holds also a place in the middle among the gods — as the theologians too think — as a link between the two Fathers (συναγωγὸς οὖσα τῶν δύο πάτερων), sending forth the life of the Soul from her own flank (καὶ ἀπο τῶν ἑαυτῆς λαγόνων τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς προιεμένη ζωήν).

The goddess who is the cause of Soul — and therefore is not Soul itself, let alone an encosmic one like the World Soul — is Rhea-Hecate. This can be inferred both from the fact that the goddess is said to be a link between the two Fathers and from the fact that she sends forth the life of the soul from her own flank. As for the first indication, it seems evident that the Fathers mentioned are Kronos and Zeus, whereas the 'the theologians' are probably the Chaldaean sages and their oracles, especially Fr. 50 above (so Lewy 1978[2]: 142 n. 283 and Festugière *In Tim.* vol. III, p. 169, n. 2). The second one contains a reference to Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 51 according to which 'a great stream of the primordially-generated Soul' pours forth from the right flank of Hecate. Proclus *In Tim.* III 249, 12ff. identifies this deity as 'the universal life-giving goddess' (ἡ ὅλη ζῳογονος θεότης), 'the very great Rhea'.

As for Proclus' devotion to Rhea, Marinus *Vita Procli* § 33 informs us that Proclus was favoured by the Mother of the Gods. He prayed much to her. She, in her turn, did much for him and revealed important things on almost a daily basis. Proclus must have written a book about her, 'on the whole theology of this goddess,' which has not been preserved. In what is sometimes supposed to be the remains of Proclus' house, archaeologists have found a relief of the Mother of the Gods in a *naiskos*.[4]

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[4] The identification of this house, known to archaeologists as building Chi, is a

1.3 *Hecate on the level of the hypercosmic gods*
Proclus *Theol. Plat.* VI 11, pp. 48, 1-55, 27 discusses the triad of Kore, the triad of life-giving goddesses among the hypercosmic or leader-gods that includes Hecate. This triad originates from the 'life-giving source that has obtained the middle centre between the two Fathers' (*Theol. Plat.* VI 11, p. 48, 15f.; cf. Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 50) which we can now easily recognize as Rhea-Hecate on the level of Nous. The goddess is the monad causing this triad (*Theol. Plat.* VI 11, p. 48, 21ff.).

According to *Theol. Plat.* VI 11, p. 50, 4-20, this triad has a double causative function, comparable to that of Rhea-Hecate. Together with Zeus (a god superior to her, like Kronos in the case of Rhea) she produces the unique Demiurge of individual beings (τὸν ἕνα δημιουρὸν τῶν μεριστῶν),[5] whereas with Pluto (a god inferior to her, like the Demiurge in the case of Rhea) she ensouls even the most inferior things in the universe.

The members of this triad are, according to the Greek theologians, Artemis Korikê, Persephone Korikê, and Athena Korikê; according to the Barbarian theologians (i.e. the Chaldaean sages) Hecate, Soul, and Virtue (ἀρετή) (*Theol. Plat.* VI 11, p. 51, 19-28). Saffrey-Westerink p. 152 n. 8 point out that this is a reference to Chaldaean Oracles Frr. 51 and 52: according to Fr. 51 Soul streams forth from Hecate's right flank (see above), whereas according to Fr. 52, Virtue streams forth from her left. From this it should not be concluded that Proclus interpreted these Chaldaean Oracles differently at different times. Rather one and the same text can be applied to divinities of the same *seira* at different levels of reality, as for example is done in the case of the myth of the winged charioteer from the *Phaedrus* throughout books four, five, and six of the

matter of some debate. According to Alison Frantz 1988: 42-44, the find of the above-mentioned relief focuses the identification of the house on Proclus himself, given Marinus' testimony (mentioned above) that Proclus kept this goddess in high esteem. Her view is supported by other archaeologists, see e.g. Castrén 1994: 12 and Arja Karivieri 1994: 115-139, esp. p. 119 for the relief. The latter also points to the find of a votive offering of a pig in the same building. It is suggested that it was offered to the Mother of the Gods, see pp. 132-138. However attractive the idea may be that we have located Proclus' house, it should be stressed that the identification of building Chi with the house of Proclus is just an hypothesis, not a matter of fact.

[5] Note that this is not *the* Demiurge, for the latter is the Demiurge of universal things (τῶν ὅλων). For the four different Demiurges in Proclus, see Opsomer, forthcoming.

Theologia Platonica. In the case of Hecate, she produces Soul on the level of Hecate-Rhea, whereas Hecate on the level of the leader-gods contains the source of soul and produces them.[6]

We observe that Hecate too cannot be the World Soul for, as was noted above, the World Soul is encosmic whereas Hecate is an hypercosmic deity and therefore superior to the former.

Proclus appears to have had a special relationship with this Hecate. He remarks that this deity, whom the Barbarians (i.e. the Chaldaeans) call awful and fearful, 'is for us the greatest' (*Theol. Plat.* VI 11, p. 53, 25ff.). Marinus informs us that Proclus, after he had gone through the Chaldaean purificatory rites, conversed with luminous apparitions of Hecate. Such was eye-witnessed by others. Proclus recorded these events in a special book now lost (Marinus *Vita Procli* § 28).

1.4 *The goddesses of* H. VI

It seems to me to be highly unlikely that the 'Mother of the Gods' (vs. 1) is not Rhea. Proclus very consistently identifies the Mother of the Gods with Rhea. Since, as we have seen, Rhea produces the universal classes of gods as well as the hypercosmic and encosmic gods, whereas Hecate on the level of the hypercosmic gods especially produces the partial souls, it is the former who is the best candidate for the title 'Mother of the Gods'. It also makes good sense that she is invoked together with Zeus the Demiurge,[7] for she is his mother and together with him, she produces the hypercosmic and encosmic gods.

Now, is this Mother of the Gods a goddess other than Hecate in vs. 2? I am inclined to think so. First, there is the fact that Proclus seems to prefer not to call Rhea Hecate, as for example Damascius does. Second there is the epithet προθύραιος (vs. 2). This epithet implies that this Hecate is inferior to another deity (see commentary *ad loc.*), most likely to be either the Mother of the Gods or Zeus. In either case, Hecate cannot be the Mother of the Gods. The fact that Zeus and hypercosmic Hecate are invoked in the same hymn is understandable, given the fact that they work together in the creation of the one Demiurge of individual things.

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6 Cf. *Theol. Plat.* VI 11 p. 54, 8-15.

7 That the Zeus invoked in *H.* VI is the Demiurge appears from the epithets in vs. 3, see commentary *ad loc.*

The fact that both the Mother of the Gods and Hecate are invoked in one hymn does not come as a surprise either. Not only is Rhea, the Mother of the Gods, the monad of the triad of Kore, but what is more, monad and triad are closely connected. Kore, in so far as she works together with Zeus, 'remains in the house of her mother (i.e. Rhea), which the latter prepared for her, a house in inaccessible regions, transcending the universe.' Proclus, who identifies Rhea with Demeter,[8] here refers to the Eleusinian mysteries, according to which Kore dwells during one half of the year with her mother Demeter in the realm of the gods (*Theol. Plat.* VI 11 p. 50, 4-20).[9]

To conclude then, it is not only likely that this hymn is directed to three gods, it also makes sense, for these are three divinities with a very close relationship to each other.

2. *Rhea, Hecate, and Zeus*

2.1 *Rhea, the Mother of the Gods*

Rhea, the Mother of the Gods, belongs to the race of the Titans. Kronos fathered by her the Olympian gods Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus (see e.g. Hesiod *Th.* 453-458), hence she is called the Mother of the Gods (cf. vs. 1). Kronos, fearing that his children would overthrow him, swallowed them, with the exception of Zeus. Rhea smuggled the latter away to the island of Crete. There he grew up, eventually overcame his father and rescued his brothers and sisters. According to the Orphic theologies, which attribute a place of prominence to Rhea, Zeus fathers Persephone-Kore by her (see West 1983: 93ff.). We note that Proclus appears to follow closely the traditional mythological accounts in his treatment of Rhea, Zeus and Kore as outlined above.

In the course of time, Rhea — often accompanied by savage animals like lions and wolves — was identified with a good many powerful maternal goddesses who presided over mystery rites, notably Cybele (for whom see commentary to *H.* I 25) as does Julian *Or.* VIII (*On the Mother of the Gods*), and Demeter (see West 1983: 93f.); for other identifications see Françoise Gury *LIMC* VII, 1 1994: 628-629.

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[8] Julian *Or.* VIII (*On the Mother of the Gods*) 159b too equates the Mother of the Gods with Demeter and connects her with the Eleusinian mysteries (173b-d). For the relation between Hecate and Demeter and Persephone, see below § 2.2 *Hecate*.

[9] This is of course in accordance with Proclus' general rule that everything that emanates from its cause somehow remains in it, see *El.* § 30, p. 34, 12-27.

Rhea is celebrated in *Orphic Hymn* 14, whereas *Homeric Hymn* 14 and *Orphic Hymn* 27 address the Mother of the Gods as does Julian in his prose hymn *Or.* VIII (*On the Mother of the Gods*).

2.2 *Hecate*[10]

Hecate is a goddess of boundaries. She stands guard not only at crossroads and doorways, but also at the dividing line between life and death. She is the mistress of souls, whom she guides in both directions across this line. It is in this function that the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* mentions her: she is witness to the descent of Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, in Hades and her return to the living daylight (Johnston 1990: 21-28). Since she holds power over souls and daemons, she is a patron deity of magicians (Johnston 1990: 143-148).

The theurgists assign an important role to her. She is supposed to aid them in different ways. She controls the iynx-daemons, beings that constitute the link between the celestial and terrestial realms. The theurgists need these daemons for their ascent towards the celestial realm (Johnston 1990: 90-110). They appear to the theurgist to instruct him about the construction and operation of the cosmos, necessary knowledge for successful theurgy (Johnston 1990: 111-133). Johnston (1990) argues that Hecate's prominence can be explained by the fact that she is the World Soul, and for that reason the mediating entity par excellence between our world and that of the gods. As I have argued above, this identification does not work. However, even if Hecate is not the World Soul, Proclus seems to consider her as a mediating force.

Hecate in her pre-theurgical manifestation is celebrated by Hesiod *Th.* 411-452 and *Orphic Hymn* 1.

2.3 *Zeus*[11]

Zeus hardly needs any introduction. When we concentrate on his traditional features that are of importance for this hymn, we note the following: Zeus is the most powerful among the Olympian gods and therefore their king (cf. vs. 3: Zeus is the hailed as the supreme god). He is in the Homeric phrase 'father of men and gods.' The

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[10] On Hecate, see especially the monograph by Johnston 1990.

[11] On Zeus, see e.g. Burkert 1985: 125-131; F. Graf *DDD* 1995: 1758-1771, F. Graf *OCD* 1996^3: 1636-1638.

supremacy of Zeus is highlighted in the short *Homeric Hymn* 23. Because of this, he becomes the all-embracing god of the universe. Zeus is all things or at least the cause of all things. This tendency of what is sometimes called ‘Zeus-monotheism’ culminates in Stoic speculations about Zeus as the *Logos* permeating the universe. Cleanthes celebrates this Zeus in his famous hymn. For the Athenian Neoplatonists, Zeus may not be the most important deity, but he is still the Demiurge of this universe all the same. As the most powerful god, he is the saviour par excellence (cf. the prayers for salvation in this hymn), as is apparent from the *Orphic Hymns* 15, 19 and 20 in his honour.

Text

Χαῖρε, θεῶν μῆτερ, πολυώνυμε, καλλιγένεθλε·
χαῖρ’, Ἑκάτη προθύραιε, μεγασθενές. ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς
χαῖρ’, Ἴανε προπάτορ, Ζεῦ ἄφθιτε· χαῖρ’, ὕπατε Ζεῦ.

τεύχετε δ’ αἰγλήεσσαν ἐμοῦ βιότοιο πορείην
βριθομένην ἀγαθοῖσι, κακὰς δ’ ἀπελαύνετε νούσους
ἐκ ῥεθέων, ψυχὴν δὲ περὶ χθονὶ μαργαίνουσαν
ἕλκετ’ ἐγερσινόοισι καθηραμένην τελετῇσι.
ναί, λίτομαι, δότε χεῖρα, θεοφραδέας τε κελεύθους
δείξατέ μοι χατέοντι. φάος δ’ ἐρίτιμον ἀθρήσω,
κυανέης ὅθεν ἔστι φυγεῖν κακότητα γενέθλης.
ναί, λίτομαι, δότε χεῖρα, καὶ ὑμετέροισιν ἀήταις
ὅρμον ἐς εὐσεβίης με πελάσσατε κεκμηῶτα.

χαῖρε, θεῶν μῆτερ, πολυώνυμε, καλλιγένεθλε·
χαῖρ’, Ἑκάτη προθύραιε, μεγασθενές. ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς
χαῖρ’, Ἴανε προπάτορ, Ζεῦ ἄφθιτε· χαῖρ’, ὕπατε Ζεῦ.

Translation

Hail, Mother of Gods, many-named, with fair off-spring blest.
Hail, porch-dwelling Hecate, of great strength. But you too,
hail, forefather Ianus, Zeus imperishable; hail, supreme Zeus.

Make the course of my life radiant,
weighed down with good things, but drive the evil diseases
from my limbs; attract my soul, now madly raging around the earth,
once it has been purified through the intellect-awaking rites.
Yea, I beg you, give your hand, and show me, as one in need,
the paths revealed by the gods. I will observe the precious light,
from which comes the possibility to flee the misery of dark birth.
Yea, I beg you, give me your hand, and with your winds bring me
to the harbour of piety, exhausted as I am.

Hail, Mother of Gods, many-named, with fair off-spring blest.
Hail, porch-dwelling Hecate, of great strength. But you too,
hail, forefather Ianus, Zeus imperishable; hail, supreme Zeus.

Structure

The hymn can be divided into three parts: (1) vss. 1-3 invocation of the Mother of the Gods, Hecate, and Ianus-Zeus (2) vss. 4-12 contain the requests to these gods (3) vss. 13-5 are a *verbatim* repetition of the invocation. As Saffrey 1994: 43 observes the structure of this hymn differs from Proclus' other hymns because of this ring-composition. Remarkably enough, there is no argument given why Hecate and Zeus should hear his prayer.

Commentary

Tr. 1-2: *Hail, Mother of Gods, who has many names, blessed with fair off-spring. / Hail, porch-dwelling Hecate, of great strength.*

vs. 1 χαῖρε
The dominant concern of all Greek hymns is to establish a notion of χάρις between the suppliant and the gods, i.e. a relation of reciprocal pleasure and goodwill. For that reason, many hymns begin and end with χαῖρε. It is much stronger than just 'hail' or 'farewell' (rather 'take pleasure in this hymn') and is part of the general concern of the hymnist to please the gods (Race 1982: 8f.).

vs. 1 θεῶν μῆτερ

For Proclus, the Mother of the Gods (μήτηρ τῶν θεῶν) is Rhea (i.e. Rhea-Hecate on the level of Nous), see e.g. *In Tim.* III 179, 9f.; *In RP.* I 137, 7ff. and 138, 16 (Hera imitating the Mother of the Gods is a second-degree Rhea and a partial Rhea). For the identification of Rhea with the Mother of the Gods by the Neoplatonists, cf. Julian *Or.* VIII (On the Mother of the Gods) 159b. For the expression, cf. *Homeric Hymn* 14 (to the Mother of the Gods) 1: Μητέρα μοι πάντων τε θεῶν πάντων τ' ἀνθρώπων; *Orphic Hymn* 14 (to Rhea) 9: μήτηρ μέν τε θεῶν ἠδὲ θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων; *Orphic Hymn* 27 (to the Mother of the Gods) 1: θεῶν μῆτερ, τροφὲ πάντων; *Orphic Hymn* 41 (to mother Antaia[12]) *Homeric Hymn* 30 (to Gaia) 17: Χαῖρε, θεῶν μήτηρ.

vs. 1 πολυώνυμε

For the adjective πολυώνυμος in Greek hymns, see commentary to *H.* II 1. For Rhea being called πολυώνυμος cf. *Orphic Hymn* 27 (to the Mother of the Gods) 5.

vs. 1 καλλιγένεθλε·

An appropriate, if rare, epithet of the mother of the Demiurge, the universal, the hypercosmic and encosmic gods.

vs. 2 Ἑκάτη

For a discussion of Rhea, see the introduction to this hymn.

vs. 2 προθύραιε

The adjective προθύραιος (porch-dwelling) is only attested in connection with Artemis in *Orphic Hymn* 2 (to Prothyreia-Artemis) 4, 12 and Hecate in this hymn. This need not be coincidence. Artemis is often identified with Hecate in the Greek tradition. Rudhardt 1991: 274f. argues that the play with epithets in *Orphic Hymn* 2 shows that its composer identified Artemis indeed with Hecate. Why the Orphic hymnist invokes Artemis as porch-dwelling does not become clear from the hymn. Perhaps we should think of Artemis in the function of some guardian god of the household.

Proclus apparently borrows the expression from Plato *Phlb.* 64c1-3: the qualities of beauty, truth, and symmetry stand in the porch of the good (τοῖς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ προθύροις). Proclus interprets this in

[12] Mother Antaia is the Demeter of the Eleusinian mysteries as is apparent from the the hymn. For Proclus, the Eleusinian Demeter is Rhea, see *Introduction* § 1.4.

accordance with his theory of causation.[13] Of the products of a cause, some remain in their cause, others emanate. Of the latter, the entities first to emanate 'are posted as it were in the 'prothyria' of the gods,[14] i.e. the porches,' (*velut in prothyris (id est proforiis) deorum ordinatus*) announcing their cause which remains inaccessible (*in abditis*) (*De mal. subs.* 14, 15-18). Hecate holds that position in relation to Rhea. As we have seen in the introduction § 1.4, Rhea inhabits 'a house in inaccessible regions (ἐν ἀβάτοις), transcending the universe.' The triad of Kore proceeds directly from this monad and — as the source of the individual souls — forms the link between us and the intelligible world.

vs. 2 μεγασθενές
A frequent epithet in connection with gods from archaic times onwards (e.g. Bacchylides *Dith.* 17, 67 of Zeus) especially in the *Orphic Hymns* e.g. 12, 1 (Heracles), 13, 2 (Kronos), 65, 1 (Ares).

Tr. 2-3: *But you yourself too, / hail, Ianus, forefather imperishable Zeus; hail, supreme Zeus.*

vs. 3 Ἴανε
The invocation of Ianus is remarkable. It is a Roman deity in whom neither the Greek Neoplatonists nor the Chaldaean nor Orphic traditions take any demonstrable interest. It may serve to illustrate Proclus' famous remark that a philosopher should be the *hierophantês* of the whole world, worshipping all divinities (Marinus *Vita Procli* § 19).

In the Roman pantheon, Ianus is the double-faced god of doors and gates. He controls the beginning of things.[15] We can only speculate about the reason why Proclus equates him with Zeus the Demiurge (for Zeus as the Demiurge, cf. commentary to vs. 3 ὕπατε Ζεῦ). From Augustine *Civ. D.* VIII 9 we learn that the difference between Jupiter (i.e. the Roman equivalent of the Greek Zeus) and Ianus is an insignificant one. It should be kept in mind, however, that Augustine tries to show that there is no real distinction for polemical

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[13] On the metaphysical interpretation of the *Philebus* by the Neoplatonists, see Van Riel 1997, volume 2.

[14] The expression 'prothyria of the gods' perhaps takes it origin from *Homeric Hymn* 4 (to Hermes) 384: τάδ' ἀθανάτων εὐκόσμητα προθύραια.

[15] On Ianus, see e.g. K. Thraede *RAC* XVI 1259-1282; F. Graf *Neue Pauly* 5, 858-861; N. Purcell *OCD* 1996^3: 792.

purposes against paganism. All the same, Macrobius *Sat.* I 9, 14 (citing an ancient poem of the first century BCE) describes Ianus in a way which makes him resemble Zeus the Demiurge, the supreme god in the cosmos: Ianus is the god of gods (*deus deorum*) who is the creator and ruler of everything (*qui cuncta fingit eadem regit*).

There may be yet another reason for Ianus to appear here. Ianus functions as the porter of the heavenly court, not unlike Hecate Prothyraios. Hecate is said to dwell in the porch of her mother's palace because she is the link between the inaccessible divine world of Rhea and this world (see commentary to vs. 2 προθύραιε). Ianus/Zeus the Demiurge is likewise a divinity on the border between the intelligible world to which Rhea too belongs, and this world of which he is the creator.

Furthermore, both Hecate and Ianus were traditionally portrayed with more than one face, Hecate in order to be better equipped to watch the cross-roads, Ianus in order to keep an eye on what goes on both inside and outside the house. This similarity in appearance did not escape the ancient poets.[16] The Neoplatonists in their turn attached a special meaning to this traditional representation. A divinity that is double-faced (ἀμφιπρόσωπος) looks on the one hand upwards to higher realities and on the other hand downwards to lower entities. An example is the World Soul: the Soul receives on the one hand the emanations of the intelligible world and on the other steers the universe and is therefore called ἀμφιπρόσωπος, (Proclus *In Tim.* II 130, 23 and 246, 19). Interestingly enough, the same word is used as an equivalent of the Latin *bifrons* in connection with Ianus (Plu. *Num.* 19, 11). In the case of Ianus, these two faces fit well with his role as Demiurge. The Demiurge has to look into two different directions: upwards in order contemplate the Forms, downwards in order to create the cosmos after the example of the Forms. Damascius calls Hecate likewise ἀμφιπρόσωπος (*De Princip.* I 315, 20 ed. Ruelle; *In Parm.* II 152, 23 ed. Ruelle). This has been observed by several scholars (Lewy 1978²: 94 n. 111, Majercik 1989: 211, Johnston 1990: 59-60), who go, however, astray in their interpretation: they assume that Hecate is the ἀμφιπρόσωπος World Soul. This is not the case. As has been argued in the introduction to this hymn, Hecate cannot be the World Soul. What is more, Damascius speaks about Rhea-Hecate,

[16] See e.g. Ovid (*Fast.* I 133-144), who has Ianus explain that he, as the porter of the gods (*caelestis ianitor aulae*), has two faces, like Hecate has three, lest he should lose time by twisting his neck.

the centre between the two Fathers. Be this as it may, the idea in Damascius is the same: Hecate directs her gaze both upwards to Kronos and downwards to her son Zeus. Evidence for Hecate ἀμφιπρόσωπος on the level of the hypercosmic gods is absent, but here too we can think of the same sort of explanation: she looks both upwards to Rhea and downwards to the things she imbues with life.

vs. 3 προπάτωρ

If an entity is a προπάτωρ (forefather) of another, this means that it is an indirect cause higher than the direct cause of the entity of which it is the forefather. Proclus *In Parm.* I 674, 28ff. gives the following example: angels are superior to daemons. They are, so to speak, the fathers of the daemons, whereas the gods who fathered the angels are in their turn the forefathers (προπάτορες) of the daemons. In the same way Proclus calls the One the forefather of the souls rather than their father, since their direct cause is situated at the level of Nous (*Theol. Plat.* III 1, p. 5, 13ff. τὴν ὠδῖνα τῶν ψυχῶν ἥν ἔχουσιν ἀεὶ τοῦ πάντων πατρὸς καὶ προπάτορος), cf. note Saffrey-Westerink *ad loc.*, see also Marie C. van der Kolf/v. Geisau *P. W.* XXIII 756-7 *s.v. Propator.*

According to Plato *Ti.* 41a7ff. (cf. Proclus *In Tim.* III 197, 26ff.) the Demiurge leaves the task of the creation of three mortal species (birds, terrestrial animals and water-animals) to the younger gods. As Proclus *In Tim.* III 225, 26-226, 18 explains, these mortal beings are created because of the Demiurge (ὑπ' αὐτοῦ), but not directly by him (δι' αὐτοῦ). The Demiurge is therefore a 'forefather' in the sense just discussed. Proclus does not explicitly mention this interpretation of the Demiurge as forefather, but a parallel may be found in the Hermetic corpus which influenced Iamblichus. In *Corpus Herm.* Exc. II A 13 ed. Festugière III, p. 7, the creator of the planets (cf. Plato's Demiurge) is called 'προπάτωρ', whereas the sun is considered as the only demiurge after him, who takes care of this world (*ibid.* 14). The creating god is also called 'προπάτωρ' in *Kore Kosmou* 10. Like Plato's Demiurge, he leaves the creation of mortal beings to lesser gods, whom he addresses in a speech not unlike the one in the *Timaeus* (*o.c.* 19). Iamblichus *Myst.* VIII 4, p. 267, 3 mentions this προπάτωρ as the Demiurge who, according to the Hermetic tradition, comes before another lower demiurge, the sun. The fact that Proclus *In Tim.* III 227, 28-30 too grants king Helios pride of place among the younger demiurgic gods perhaps indicates that he too was aware of these Hermetic theories in one form or another.

vs. 3 Ζεῦ ἄφθιτε·
The Greek gods are immortal, hence ἄφθιτος (imperishable), see e.g. *Homeric Hymn* 4 (to Hermes) 325f.: the Olympian gods are ἀθάνατοι δὲ ἄφθιτοι. For Zeus ἄφθιτος, see e.g. Pindar *P.* 4, 291; the Orphic theogony *apud* Eusebius *PE* 3, 9, 2, 3; *Orphic Hymns* 15 (to Zeus) 1: Ζεῦ ἄφθιτε.

For a Neoplatonist like Proclus to be imperishable is a quality of the intelligible realm of the gods as opposed to our world of becoming and passing away, see e.g. Proclus *In Parm.* III 800, 25 (Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 37) : our cosmos is modelled after a νοερὸν τύπον ἄφθιτον. Proclus *In Tim.* II 82, 16 quotes an Orphic text (Fr. 168, 17 ed. Kern) which assigns this quality to the Zeus/the Demiurge:'... the sages of Greece do not refuse to say about the demiurge himself: his royal intellect, without deceit, is imperishable aether (ἄφθιτος αἰθήρ)' etc.

vs. 3 ὕπατε Ζεῦ
Already in Homer, ὕπατος is a standard epithet of Zeus as the king of the Olympians gods, see e.g. *Il.* 5, 756; 17, 339; 19, 258; *Od.* 19, 303; 20, 230; 24, 473. Proclus *In Tim.* I 316, 4ff. discusses this Homeric formula: the fact that Homer calls Zeus 'the highest of the rulers' (ὕπατον κρειόντων, see *Il.* 8, 31; *Od.* 1, 45 and 81; 24, 473) and 'the Father of men and gods' throughout the whole of his poetry' indicates that for him Zeus is the Demiurge on the level of Nous. As we have seen (chapter III § 2.2, *Figure* 1), Proclus distinguishes between many different manifestations of Zeus at different levels of reality all engaged in demiurgic activities. The adjective ὕπατος indicates that this is the supreme Demiurge on the level of Nous: 'but since he (this demiurge) is the most important of the demiurges, he is honoured as 'the highest of the rulers' (ὕπατον κρειόντων) by the one (Homer), and 'the best of the causes' by the other (Plato *Ti.* 29a5f.)' (Proclus *In Tim.* I, 333, 18).

Tr. 4-6: *Make the course of my life radiant, / weighed down with good things, but drive the evil diseases / from my limbs;*

vs. 4 τεύχετε δ' αἰγλήεσσαν ἐμοῦ βιότοιο πορείην
For prayers that the gods may direct the course of Proclus' life, see *H.* II 19. Proclus asks for a radiant (αἰγλήεις) course of life, i.e. a glorious one (cf. L.-S.-J. *s.v.* αἴγλη 3). Prayers for glory are common in the hymns, see *H.* I 43; III, 17; VII 48.

vs. 5. βριθομένην ἀγαθοῖσι

A prayer for a life weighed down with good things (ἀγαθά) is especially appropriate in a hymn to the Mother of the Gods. According to *Orphic Hymns* 27 (to the Mother of the Gods) 9f., people call her ὀλβοδότις (giver of prosperity), 'because you bestow on men all manner of gifts (παντοίων ἀγαθῶν δῶρα).'

These good things may range from divine illumination to good parents,[17] although only the spiritual goods like good contact with the gods and illumination really matter to the philosopher, whereas others, the worldly goods, like fame, richness, political power and the like should be of only shallow interest to him. Here, the intended ἀγαθά seem especially to be the worldly goods that may befall someone during his life. It is only after the prayer for health (vss. 5-6) that Proclus turns to spiritual goods (the salvation of the soul). As we have observed already (chapter V § 5), Proclus believed that the participation in theurgical rites (cf. vs. 7) was not just spiritually beneficent, but also yielded external goods and we find him often praying for them.

vss. 5-6 κακὰς δ' ἀπελαύνετε νούσους | ἐκ ῥεθέων

On Proclus' prayers for health in general, see the commentary on *H.* I, 42. Cousin 1864: 1321 n.1 (cf. Vogt 1957: 74) suggests that Proclus alludes here to arthritis. According to Marinus *Vita Procli* § 31, Proclus feared that he had inherited his father's illness (ἡ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀρθρῖτις νόσος) when he suffered pain of that kind in the prime of his life. The gods sent him a sign that he did not have to worry: a sparrow lifted the bandage from his aching foot when he was lying on his bed. He remained, however, anxious about it. Subsequently, a stranger (apparently the god Asclepius) came from Epidaurus and kissed his legs. From then on he did not fear the disease anymore nor did he ever suffer any pain of that sort again. Such a biographical interpretation is of course tempting, although it must remain a hypothesis. Praying for health is, after all, a convention in hymns.[18] In *H.* I, 42 e.g. Proclus prays for health for the body (σώμα) as a whole. Moreover, the ῥεθέα in this hymn may just be a poetical *pars pro toto* for body, as is the case in the oracle on the fate of Plotinus' soul: 'ῥεθέων δὲ πολυφλοίσβοιο κυδοιμοῦ | ῥωσάμενος...' (Porph. *Vita Plot.*

[17] See Marinus *Vita Procli* § 34 who sums up all good things in Proclus' life including these.

[18] See Keyßner 1932: 113-116.

22, 25f. 'you swam swiftly from the roaring surge of the body', trans. Armstrong),[19] cf. the scholion *ad. loc.*: ⟨ἐκ ῥεθέων⟩ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐντος ἤ τοῦ σώματος (Vogt 1957: 39).

Tr. 6-7: *attract my soul, which now madly rages around the earth, / once it has been purified through the intellect-awaking rites.*

vs. 6 ψυχὴν δὲ περὶ χθονὶ μαργαίνουσαν

The soul goes around the material realm (περὶ χθονί) like a madman (μαργαίνω). The verb is used in Homer *Il.* 5, 882 (hapax) by Ares to describe Diomedes' onslaughts on the gods who side with the Trojans. According to the ancient scholia, it is a synonym of μαίνεσθαι, μωραίνειν.[20] It is the bad type of madness — as opposed to the divinely inspired forms of madness — that befalls the descended soul that forgets about the intelligible world and becomes completely obsessed by the material world (see commentary to *H.* III 9 περὶ κλήροισι μανεῖσαι).

vs. 7 ἕλκετ' ἐγερσινόοισι καθηραμένην τελετῇσι.

For intellect-awaking rites that elevate the soul away from the material world to the realm of the gods, see commentary to *H.* III 4; *H.* IV 3-4. In this case, Proclus may have at least three different τελεταί in mind. First, there are those of the Mother of the Gods/Rhea; second, the Chaldaean rites in which Hecate has a prominent position. Third, Proclus identifies Rhea with Demeter and Hecate with Kore, and subsequently links them to the Eleusinian mysteries (see *Introduction* § 1.4). All these rites were, at least to Proclus' understanding, concerned with the elevation and salvation of the human soul.

Tr. 8-9: *Yea, I beg you, give your hand, and show me, as one in need, the paths / revealed by the gods. I will observe the precious light, ...*

vs. 8 ναί, λίτομαι

A traditional phrase in Greek prayers, see e.g. *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 165, 2 (Meleager); 7, 569, 1 (Agathias Scholasticus) ; 16, 240, 4 (Philipus); Nonnus *D.* 1, 134; 2, 152; 4, 173 etc.; cf. Proclus *H.* VII 45.

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[19] The word does not occur often in Neoplatonic writers: one time in Proclus and Porphyry and in a quotation from Homer in Olympiodorus *In Phd.* 10, 2, 7.

[20] See e.g. Eust. *Commentarii* II 222, 16 ed. Van der Valk; Hsch. entry μ 260-261.

vs. 8 δότε χεῖρα

The helping hand of the gods is a common place in classical literature, see e.g. Seneca *Ep.* 73, 16; Apul. *Met.* XI 25 (Vollenweider 1985: 51).

Proclus assigns to it a special function in the ascent of the human soul, as appears from his interpretation of Plato *Parm.* 126a3: Adeimantus taking Cephalus by the hand (λαβόντες τῆς χειρός). Cephalus, Proclus explains, is a soul that wishes to ascend and therefore needs the help of attendant daemons, represented in the *Parm.* by Adeimantus, Glaucon, and Antiphon. When Plato has Adeimantus stretching out his hand (χεῖρα τε ὀρέγει) to Cephalus, it symbolizes the divine order that confers power on the souls that wish to move upwards: 'for hands are symbols of powers (αἱ γὰρ χεῖρες σύμβολα δυνάμεως εἰσί)' (Proclus *In Parm.* I 666, 21-667, 2). This interpretation of hands as anagogic powers fits well in the context of this hymn, for vss. 6-12 are a request for the elevation of Proclus' soul to the divine realm. The image is recurrent in Neoplatonic circles, see e.g. Hermeias *In Phdr.* 1, 4-5: Socrates came as the benefactor of the human race, stretching out his hand to everyone and turning everyone to philosophy (πᾶσι χεῖρας ὀρέγων καὶ ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν προτρεπόμενους). Synesius *H.* IX (I) 122-127 too offers an interesting parallel for vss. 8-10: 'The Father will appear next to you, while stretching out his hands (χεῖρας ὀρεγνύς). For a forth-going ray (τις ἀκτίς; cf. vs. 9: φάος ἐρίτιμον) will illuminate the way (καταλάμψει μὲν ἀταρπούς; cf. vs. 8: θεοφραδέας κελεύθους) and open for you the noetic plain, the principle of beauty.' Cf. also Synesius *H.* II (IV) 296: Σὺ δὲ χεῖρα δίδου.

Proclus ascribes the symbolism of hands as divine powers to Chaldaean sources, see *In Crat.* § 176, p. 101, 26-28 (= Fr. 210c Chaldaean Oracles ed. Majercik): the sons of the theurgists call the demiurgic powers (δημιουργικαῖς δυνάμεσιν) 'hands' (χεῖρας), cf. *Theol. Plat.* VI 12, p. 64, 3-16 and *In RP* II 252, 14ff. (divine hands as demiurgic powers).

vs. 8 θεοφραδέας τε κελεύθους

The gods reveal paths to the human souls that wish to escape the realm of matter, see commentary to *H.* III 13; *H.* IV 14. The word κέλευθος here is an equivalent to the ἀτραπιτός/ἀτραπός in the latter two cases. For κέλευθος as a path to god, see Synesius *H.* IX (I) 115: Blessed is he, who, having endured a lot of hardship, has finally seen

the depth of the divine light, 'after he has walked the paths of Nous' (ἐπιβὰς νόου κελεύθων).

Proclus normally uses κέλευθος either (1) when quoting Euripides *Troad.* 887-888 ἀψόφῳ κελεύθῳ (the silent way) to express the way in which the gods work (e.g. *Theol. Plat.* I 15, p. 75, 7; *Theol. Plat.* IV 14, p. 45, 3; *In RP* II 227, 4) or the unnoticed transitions from one topic to another which an author makes in his presentation (*In Tim.* I 398, 18, *In Parm.* IV 865, 12) or (2) in a quotation from Parmenides' poem (*In Parm.* VI 1078, 1; *In Tim.* I 345, 22). These uses are not relevant here.

vs. 9 μοι χατέοντι

The human soul, incapable of escaping the material realm, is in need of the divine helping hand. The phrase calls to mind *Od.* 3, 48: πάντες δὲ θέων χατέουσ' ἄνθρωποι, perhaps intentionally so, for the verses 10-12 contain a series of reminiscences of the *Odyssey*

vs. 9 φάος δ' ἐρίτιμον ἀθρήσω

On the role of light in Proclus, see commentary on *H.* I 40. Since this light is supposed to bring about the salvation of the soul, it is called 'precious' (ἐρίτιμος), as it is called 'holy' elsewhere (*H.* I 40; III 15; IV 6; VII 31, 33). This adjective occurs only here in Proclus.

> **Tr. 10-12:** ... *from which comes the possibility to flee the misery of dark birth. / Yea, I beg you, give me your hand, and bring me, exhausted as I am, to the harbour of piety with your winds.*

vss. 10-2 κυανέης ὅθεν ἔστι φυγεῖν κακότητα γενέθλης.
ναί, λίτομαι, δότε χεῖρα, καὶ ὑμετέροισιν ἀήταις
ὅρμον ἐς εὐσεβίης με πελάσσατε κεκμηῶτα.

1. *Introduction: Neoplatonic allegorical interpretations of the* Odyssey

In vss. 10-12 Proclus appears to compare his situation in the material world to that of the wandering Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey* by means of a series of expressions taken from Homer. This is in line with Proclus' global allegorical interpretation of the adventures of Odysseus. According to this exegesis, Odysseus represents the human soul that wanders around through the realm of matter, until it finally learns to escape from it and reach its homeland, the safe harbour of

Nous (see chapter III § 4.3, especially **T. 3.5**). This interpretation of the adventures of Odysseus as an allegory of the fortunes of the soul was by no means an original invention of Proclus'.[21] Pépin (1982) has examined the tradition of philosophical interpretations of Odysseus. He distinguishes between the interpretations of the Stoics and the Cynics on the one hand, and those of the Pythagoreans and Platonists on the other. The latter restrict themselves to the maritime adventures in the *Odyssey*, whereas the former also take the exploits of Odysseus in the *Iliad* into account. Moreover, the latter offer a metaphysical reading of the tales (the wandering soul trying to reach the transcendent world), whereas the former see Odysseus as some kind of Stoic or Cynic sage, who resists all kinds of emotional affections. Examples of the Neoplatonic interpretation may be found in Plotinus, the oracle in Porphyry *Vita Plotini* (for both see below), Porphyry *De Antro* 34-35, and Hermeias *In Phdr.* 214, 4-24. For the Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Odyssey*, cf. also Lamberton 1986. An interpretation comparable to the Neoplatonic one occurs in various contemporary Christian writers (for which see Pépin 1982: 10-14).

2. *commentary vss. 10-12*
κυανέης ὅθεν ἔστι φυγεῖν κακότητα γενέθλης
The world of becoming (γενέθλη) harms our soul, see commentary on *H.* I 30-1. For that reason we should seek to flee from it. The use of the word φυγεῖν is significant in the present allegorical context. There are two possible Homeric sources for it. A first possibility is *Il.* 2, 140: φεύγωμεν σὺν νηυσὶ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν·. It is quoted completely out of context in Plotinus *Enn.* I 6 [1] 8, 12-21:

> This would be a truer advice: 'Let us fly to our dear country' (Φεύγωμεν δὴ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα). What then is our way of escape, and how are we to find it? We shall put out to sea, as Odysseus did, from the witch Circe or Calypso — as the poet says (I think with a hidden meaning) — and was not content to stay though he had delights of the eyes and lived among much beauty of sense. Our country from which we came is there, our Father is there (trans. Armstrong).

Here, 'our country' is the intelligible realm from which we originate and to which we seek to return once the spell of the bewitching material world has been broken. The same Homeric verse is alluded

[21] As Moutsopoulos 1984: 179 claims.

to several times by Clement of Alexandria *Protrept.* XII 118, 1-4, once more in the context of an allegorical interpretation of the Odyssey (see Pépin 1982: 10-11). As Pépin 1982: 15 observes, the quotation in Plotinus has as its background a memory of the famous 'flight' of Plato's *Tht.* 176a: χρὴ ἐνθένδε ἐκεῖσε φεύγειν.

A second possibility is *Od.* 5, 414: ...καὶ οὔ πως μ' ἔστι πόδεσσι | στήμεναι ἀμφοτέροισι καὶ ἐκφυγέειν κακότητα. In this case, the context of the quotation is relevant: Once Odysseus had left Calypso and had put out to sea (cf. Plotinus), Poseidon sent a storm. Odysseus has been shipwrecked and is now in danger of being crushed against the rocks and cliffs. It is the same passage to which the oracle in Porphyry's *Vita Plotini* 22, 25-27 (cf. Brisson *et al.* 1992: 579f. for commentary) alludes when it describes the hardship that Plotinus' soul had to face in this material world.

The realm of matter is characterized by darkness (κυανέος, dark-blue, black), cf. commentary to *H.* IV 3. Perhaps κυανέος is intended to refer to the colour of the sea. In Homer, it is not primarily the colour of the sea, although Poseidon is called κυανοχαίτης (e.g. *Il.* 20, 144; *Od.* 9, 563), perhaps in reference to the dark blue of the sea (L.-S.-J.). Proclus *In Tim.* I 190, 1f. offers this explanation, which shows that for Proclus this is indeed the colour of the sea.

ναί, λίτομαι, δότε χεῖρα
See commentary to vs. 8.

καὶ ὑμετέροισιν ἀήταις
Favourable ἀῆται (winds) push forth real ships in Homer (e.g. *Od.* 9, 139). In allegorical contexts it is the divine favour that influences the voyage through life of the soul. In the oracle in Porphyry *Vita Plotini* c. 22, 47 the heavenly assembly of the gods breeds forth friendly winds (ὁμήγυριν ... | δαιμονίην ἐρατοῖσιν ἀναπνείουσαν ἀήταις) to the soul of Plotinus, although it should be noted that they do so *after* Plotinus has left the sea of material life. The allegorical Odysseus of Clement of Alexandria escapes the menace of the Sirens and Charybdis aided by a heavenly wind (πνεῦμα οὐράνιον), which turns out to be the Holy Spirit (Pépin 1982: 10-11). Lewy 1978[2]: 366 seems to have missed the maritime background here completely when he translates 'bear me ... upon your wings to the harbour of piety.'

ὅρμον ἐς εὐσεβίης

The harbour (ὅρμος) is the final destination for the wandering soul, providing it with rest and refuge after all the perils it has gone through. For Proclus, the soul finds rest in the Demiurgic Nous, to which he refers as the 'paternal harbour' (ὁ πατρικὸς ὅρμος), which has been discussed at length in chapter III § 4.3.

The paternal harbour is the reward for a life of piety (εὐσεβία), i.e. a life directed towards the intelligible in which one has tried to steer free as much as possible from the realm of matter and the παθή that go with it. See e.g. Proclus *In Tim.* III 274, 20ff.: Zeus the Demiurge engraves laws in the souls. According to these laws, the bad souls go to a dark place (ἐπὶ τὸ σκοτεινόν cf. vs. 10 κυανέης γενέθλης) devoid of god, whereas the pious (εὐσεβής) soul goes to heaven (εἰς οὐρανόν). The descent away from the harbour, to a secondary level on the other hand is an act of impiety (ἀσέβεια *In Parm.* V 1030, 19).

με ...κεκμηῶτα

Odysseus too is exhausted after his long voyage. When in *Od.* 10, 28f. Ithaca comes into sight, Odysseus, who has been steering the ship for nine days and nights, falls asleep (vs. 31 ἔνθ' ἐμὲ μὲν γλυκὺς ὕπνος ἐπήλυθε κεκμηῶτα). The same verse recurs later on in *Od.* 13, 282 (in a story in which Odysseus tries to fool Athena into believing that he is actually from Crete and that he incidentally ended up at Ithaca).

Proclus probably had the first instance in mind when he composed this verse. Admittedly, the similarity seems to be only superficial, but we have to take the context of the quotation into consideration. Because Odysseus fell asleep, he did not observe that his comrades opened the bag containing the winds. As a result, he was blown out of course, away from his fatherland. Sleep, in Neoplatonist allegorical idiom, means that one forgets about one's divine origin to which one must strive to return and that one's noeric processes come to a halt (Proclus *In RP.* II 350, 26ff. with a reference to *Od.* 24, 2ff.). The opposite, the awaking of *nous*, i.e., turning our attention to the intelligible world, results in our salvation, cf. vs. 7 the intellect-awaking rites. Contrary to the real Odysseus, the oracle in Porphyry *Vita Plotini* 20, 40 says about the Odysseus who is Plotinus: 'Sweet sleep never held your eyes.' As a result, he 'saw many fair sights which are hard for human seekers after wisdom to see.' What Proclus hopes for, then, is that — contrary to the tired Odysseus, who was so exhausted

that he was overcome by sleep and thus missed his destination — he himself stays awake and reaches the harbour safe and sound.

Tr. 13-5: *Hail, Mother of Gods, who has many names, blessed with fair offspring. / Hail, porch-dwelling Hecate, of great strength. But you yourself too, / hail, Ianus, forefather, imperishable Zeus; hail, supreme Zeus.*

For vvs. 13-15 (a literal repetition of vss. 1-3) see commentary on vss. 1-3.

VII. (ΕΙΣ ΑΘΗΝΑΝ ΠΟΛΥΜΗΤΙΝ)

Introduction[1]

According to Greek mythology, the virgin goddess Athena was born fully armoured from the head of her father Zeus. Later authors, including Proclus (cf. commentary to vss. 1-2), associate this birth with the fact that Athena is the goddess of wisdom. This explanation cannot be correct, since for the early Greeks it is the diaphragm rather than the head that is the seat of right thinking (Burkert 1985: 138f.).

Athena's weaponry included helmet, lance and spear (cf. vss. 3-4). It hints at her fundamental task: the protection of cities. For that reason her temple is frequently the central sanctuary of a city on the acropolis, notably in Athens (cf. vs. 21), but also elsewhere, e.g. Argos, Sparta, and Ilion (see Burkert 1985: 140; Graf *DDD* 1995: 217). As a warrior Athena is the opposite of Ares. Whereas the latter is all brawn and no brain, Athena, the goddess of practical intelligence and cleverness, not only inspires the warriors with courage, but also helps them to think out ruses (cf. vss. 49-50).

Athena does not apply her cleverness to the works of war only, but also to the handicrafts. She invented e.g. the art of weaving, but also that of shipbuilding (she constructed the Argo for Jason), built the first chariot and fabricated the first bridle. Hence she is celebrated as *Ergane*, worker (cf. vss. 19-20).

Athena is remarkable for the fact that she is always near her protégés, like Odysseus, Heracles and Achilles (Burkert 1985: 141). Proclus airs the same sentiments of a close contact with Athena when he declares himself to be hers (vs. 42).

If anywhere, it was especially in Athens that Athena was worshipped. Whether the city was called after the goddess or *vice versa*, there must have been a close relation between the two from the earliest times onwards, as appears from the myths concerning the origin of Athens and the Athenians. As for the Athenians, Hephaistos

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[1] On Athena in general, see e.g. W. Kraus, *RAC* vol. I 870-881; Burkert 1985: 139-143; Graf *DDD* 1995: 216-222; F. Graf *Der Neue Pauly* II 160-166.

once tried in vain to rape Athena (cf. vss. 9-10). In the process he spilt his seed on her. She wiped it away so that it fell on Attic soil. From this the race of the Athenians sprouted up. Attica itself came into the possession of Athena after a fierce contest with Poseidon. In this contest she presented Athens with the cultivated olive-tree (cf. vss. 23-30). Athena's bond with the city of Athens was expressed especially by the magnificent Parthenon with its famous statue of an armed Athena by Pheidias as well as by various festivals, notably the Panathenaia (see for Athenian festivals in honour of Athena e.g. Graf *DDD* 1995: 2129-221). The special association of Athens with Athena of which Proclus' hymn testifies was still generally felt in late Antiquity. The celebration of the Panathenaia continued well into the fifth century CE, whereas it was only in Proclus' own days that the cult statue of Athens was shipped to Byzantium.

The *Homeric Hymns* 11 and 28 and *Orphic Hymn* 32 to Athena square with the sketch of her given above. All hymns stress her belligerent character, especially *Homeric Hymn* 11. *Homeric Hymn* 28 focuses on the birth of Athena from the head of Zeus, also alluded to in *Orphic Hymn* 32. *Orphic Hymn* 32 is the only one of the three that alludes to Athena as the deity of practical intelligence.

Text

Κλῦθί μευ, αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος, ἣ γενετῆρος
πηγῆς ἐκπροθοροῦσα καὶ ἀκροτάτης ἀπὸ σειρῆς·
ἀρσενόθυμε, φέρασπι, μεγασθενές, ὀβριμοπάτρη,
Παλλάς, Τριτογένεια, δορυσσόε, χρυσεοπήληξ,
κέκλυθι· δέχνυσο δ' ὕμνον ἐύφρονι, πότνια, θυμῷ,
μηδ' αὔτως ἀνέμοισιν ἐμόν ποτε μῦθον ἐάσῃς,
ἣ σοφίης πετάσασα θεοστιβέας πυλεῶνας
καὶ χθονίων δαμάσασα θεημάχα φῦλα Γιγάντων·
ἣ πόθον Ἡφαίστοιο λιλαιομένοιο φυγοῦσα
παρθενίης ἐφύλαξας ἑῆς ἀδάμαντα χαλινόν·
ἣ κραδίην ἐσάωσας ἀμιστύλλευτον ἄνακτος
αἰθέρος ἐν γυάλοισι μεριζομένου ποτὲ Βάκχου
Τιτήνων ὑπὸ χερσί, πόρες δέ ἑ πατρὶ φέρουσα,
ὄφρα νέος βουλῇσιν ὑπ' ἀρρήτοισι τοκῆος
ἐκ Σεμέλης περὶ κόσμον ἀνηβήσῃ Διόνυσος·
ἧς πέλεκυς, θήρεια ταμὼν προθέλυμνα κάρηνα

πανδερκοῦς Ἑκάτης παθέων, ηὔνησε γενέθλην·
ἢ κράτος ἤραο σεμνὸν ἐγερσιβρότων ἀρετάων·
ἢ βίοτον κόσμησας ὅλον πολυειδέσι τέχναις
δημιοεργείην νοερὴν ψυχαῖσι βαλοῦσα·
ἢ λάχες ἀκροπόληα καθ’ ὑψιλόφοιο κολώνης,
σύμβολον ἀκροτάτης μεγάλης σέο, πότνια, σειρῆς·
ἢ χθόνα βωτιάνειραν ἐφίλαο, μητέρα βίβλων,
πατροκασιγνήτοιο βιησαμένη πόθον ἱρόν,
οὔνομα δ’ ἄστεϊ δῶκας ἔχειν σέο καὶ φρένας ἐσθλάς·
ἔνθα μάχης ἀρίδηλον ὑπὸ σφυρὸν οὔρεος ἄκρον
σῆμα καὶ ὀψιγόνοισιν ἀνεβλάστησας ἐλαίην,
εὖτ’ ἐπὶ Κεκροπίδῃσι Ποσειδάωνος ἀρωγῇ
μυρίον ἐκ πόντοιο κυκώμενον ἤλυθε κῦμα,
πάντα πολυφλοίσβοισιν ἑοῖς ῥεέθροισιν ἱμάσσον.

κλῦθί μευ, ἡ φάος ἁγνὸν ἀπαστράπτουσα προσώπου·
δὸς δέ μοι ὄλβιον ὅρμον ἀλωομένῳ περὶ γαῖαν,
δὸς ψυχῇ φάος ἁγνὸν ἀπ’ εὐιέρων σέο μύθων
καὶ σοφίην καὶ ἔρωτα· μένος δ’ ἔμπνευσον ἔρωτι
τοσσάτιον καὶ τοῖον, ὅσον χθονίων ἀπὸ κόλπων
αὖ ἐρύσῃ πρὸς Ὄλυμπον ἐς ἤθεα πατρὸς ἑῆος.
εἰ δέ τις ἀμπλακίη με κακὴ βιότοιο δαμάζει—
οἶδα γάρ, ὡς πολλῇσιν ἐρίχθομαι ἄλλοθεν ἄλλαις
πρήξεσιν οὐχ ὁσίαις, τὰς ἤλιτον ἄφρονι θυμῷ—,
ἵλαθι, μειλιχόβουλε, σαόμβροτε, μηδέ μ’ ἐάσῃς
ῥιγεδαναῖς Ποιναῖσιν ἕλωρ καὶ κύρμα γενέσθαι
κείμενον ἐν δαπέδοισιν, ὅτι τεὸς εὔχομαι εἶναι.
δὸς γυίοις μελέων σταθερὴν καὶ ἀπήμον’ ὑγείην,
σαρκοτακῶν δ’ ἀπέλαυνε πικρῶν ἀγελάσματα νούσων,
ναί, λίτομαι, βασίλεια, καὶ ἀμβροσίῃ σέο χειρὶ
παῦσον ὅλην κακότητα μελαινάων ὀδυνάων.
δὸς βιότῳ πλώοντι γαληνιόωντας ἀήτας,
τέκνα, λέχος, κλέος, ὄλβον, εὐφροσύνην ἐρατεινήν,
πειθώ, στωμυλίην φιλίης, νόον ἀγκυλομήτην,
κάρτος ἐπ’ ἀντιβίοισι, προεδρίην ἐνὶ λαοῖς.
κέκλυθι, κέκλυθ’, ἄνασσα· πολύλλιστος δέ σ’ ἱκάνω
χρειοῖ ἀναγκαίῃ· σὺ δὲ μείλιχον οὖας ὑπόσχες.

Departures from ed. Vogt: 17 παθέων ηὔνησε; 38 πολλοῖσιν (see Vogt 1957b: 377 *Korrekturzusatz*).

Translation

Hearken to me, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, sprung forth
from the paternal source and from the top of your series,
male-spirited, shield-bearing, of great strength, from a mighty sire,
Pallas, Tritogeneia, lance-brandisher, golden-helmeted,
hearken; accept this hymn, mistress, with a kind spirit,
do not just leave my words at the mercy of the winds,
you, who opened the gates of wisdom trodden by the gods,
and overcame the tribe of the earthly Giants which fought the gods;
you, who guarded the unconquerable girdle of your virginity
by fleeing the desire of the amorous Hephaistos;
you, who saved the heart, as yet unchopped,
of lord Bacchus in the vault of heaven, when he was once divided up
by the hands of the Titans, and brought it to his father,
in order that, through the ineffable wishes of his begetter,
a new Dionysus would grow again from Semele around the cosmos;
your axe, by cutting off at the roots the heads of all-seeing Hecate's
animals of passions, put asleep the process of becoming;
you, who loved the revered power of the mortal-awaking virtues;
you, who adorned our whole life with many kinds of skills
by casting noeric craftsmanship into souls;
you, who obtained the Acropolis on the high-crested hill,
a symbol, mistress, of the top of your great series;
you who loved the man-feeding land, mother of books,
strongly resisting the holy desire of your father's brother,
and granted the city to have your name and noble mind —
there, under the top edge of the mountain, you made an olive-tree
sprout up as manifest sign of that battle for posterity too,
when an immense gulf stirred up from the sea
came upon the children of Cecrops, directed by Poseidon,
lashing all things with its loud-roaring streams.

Hearken to me you, from whose face flashes forth holy light.
Give me, as I am roaming around the earth, a blessed harbour,
give my soul holy light from your sacred myths,
and wisdom, and love. Breathe into my love
a power so great and of such a kind that it pulls me up back again
from the vaults of matter to Olympus, into the abode of your father.
And if some grievous error in my life overpowers me
— for I know how I am buffeted by many and various unholy actions
from different sides, offences which I committed with a foolish spirit — ,
be gracious, mild-counselling goddess, preserver of mortals
do not let me become prey and spoil for the horrible Punishments
lying on the ground, since I profess to belong to you.
Give steady and propitious health to my limbs,
and drive the herds of bitter, flesh-wasting illnesses away,
yes, I beg you, my queen, and stop with your immortal hand
the entire misery of black pains.
Give calm winds to the voyage of my life,
children, a spouse, fame, happiness, lovely joy,
persuasion, conversations with friends, nimble wit,
power against my enemies, a place of prominence among the people.
Hearken, hearken, mistress. I come to you in deep supplication,
through pressing necessity. And you, lend me a gentle ear.

Structure

This hymn can be divided into four parts: I the invocation (vss. 1-6), II the aretology (vss. 7-30), III the petition (vss. 32-50), and IV a final invocation (vss. 51-2). The petition begins and ends with an invocation (vs. 31 and vs. 51). Each time (vs. 1, 31, 51) the invocation begins with κλῦθι/κέκλυθι. In vs. 5 κέκλυθι serves to split invocation I into two sections: I.1 the invocation of Athena (vss. 1-4) and I.2 an appeal for her benevolent attention (vss. 5-6). This appeal is repeated in section IV (vs. 52). Section I.1 can be subdivided in I.1.a (vss. 1-2): Athena addressed as the child of Zeus, being a traditional way of

opening a prayer, see vs. 1 with my commentary, and I.1.b (vss. 2-4): a series of epithets and names referring to qualities and attributes of Athena, once more a traditional feature from Homer onwards.[2]

Section II is an aretology on Athena, consisting of eight cola, which each start with a relative pronoun.[3] The function of this argument is to give Athena the reasons why she should answer the prayers in section III (the petition). First (vss. 7-20), she is very powerful, as is apparent from mythology (e.g. her fights with the Giants and the Titans); second (vss. 21-30), she has a special bond with Attica. Therefore, the implied reasoning is, she can help and she should help an Athenian citizen who honours her.

Section III starts off with a renewed invocation. It can be divided into three parts, which all start with δὸς:

III.1 Vss. 32-6: prayers for spiritual goods. This section can be divided into (a) a positive formulation (lead me to the heavens, give me illumination), and (b) a negative formulation (do not let me be overcome by the opposing forces of matter).
III.2 Vss. 37-42: prayers for physical health.
III.3 Vss. 43-6: prayers for external goods.

Section IV ends the hymn with a last appeal on Athena to listen to Proclus' prayers.

Date Of Composition

The hymn provides some indications for its date of composition. There is a close resemblance between the treatment of Athena in this hymn and *In Tim.* I 157, 27-169, 21, which ends in a prose hymn to her. This resemblance will be pointed out on different occasions in the commentary. We can, I think, safely assume that the date of the *In Tim.* is a *terminus post quem* for this hymn, because the hymn presupposes a profound study of the *Timaeus*. According to Marinus *Vita Procli* § 13, Proclus finished the *In Tim.* at the age of twenty eight. He was born around 412,[4] so the *In Tim.* can be dated around 440.

[2] Norden 1913: 171 citing *Il.* 5, 455 as a Homeric example.
[3] Norden 1913: 171-172 analyses this section at length as an example of the *Du-Relativstil.*
[4] For the date of Proclus' birth see chapter I § 1.

From the hymn we can infer that the Athenian acropolis was still dedicated to the worship of Athena. It commemorates the fact that Athena was once allotted the acropolis (vss. 21-22). If the Christians had already put an end to the cult of Athena at that place, this is a painful reminder for Athena of the glory that had been hers, and for that reason an inappropriate element in a hymn that celebrates her. The addition καὶ ὀψιγόνοισιν (vs. 27, see my commentary *ad loc.*) too indicates that Athena was still worshipped on the acropolis. We know that Athena was banned from the acropolis in Proclus' own days. At the time that the Christians moved the statue of Athena from the Parthenon, Athena appeared to Proclus in a dream and instructed him to prepare his house to receive her (Marinus *Vita Procli* § 31). Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* vol. I 1968: xxiii n. 1 presume that this happened about 470, which is thus the *terminus ante quem.*

I suggest that the actual date of composition is much closer to 440 than to 470. A prayer for wife and children (vs. 49) seems to be one made by a young man, not by an older one (in 470, Proclus would have been about 58 years old).

Commentary

Tr. 1-2: *Hearken to me, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, sprung forth / from the paternal source and from the top of your series, / …*

vss. 1-2 Κλῦθί μευ, αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος, ἣ γενετῆρος
πηγῆς ἐκπροθοροῦσα καὶ ἀκροτάτης ἀπὸ σειρῆς·

The phrase κλῦθί μευ, αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος at the beginning of a prayer to Athena is a Homeric formula, see *Il.* 10, 278; *Od.* 4, 762; 6, 324. In Homer, the description αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος (child of the aegis-bearing Zeus) refers always to Athena (e.g. *Il.* 1, 202; 2, 157; 5, 115). It reflects the special relationship between Zeus and Athena. Although Zeus is (in)famous for having an abundant off-spring, Athena appears in Homer and elsewhere as Zeus' favourite child. The reason for this is that he is more than just her father, since Athena was born from the head of Zeus.

The two opening verses of this hymn refer to the Neoplatonic allegorical interpretation of this spectacular birth in terms of causation. As we have seen (chapter III § 4.2), Zeus the Demiurge contains in himself all the causes in an unified way. These causes emanate from

him separated from each other. The first phase of the emanation of these causes as separate entities are the leader-gods, to whom Athena belongs. These leader-gods stand thus each at the head of their series (for the term σειρά/series, cf. also commentary to *H.* I 18). For Zeus the Demiurge as a πηγή (source), see e.g. *In Tim.* I 319, 5: the highest point in every series has the quality of a source (πάσης δὲ σειρᾶς τὸ ἀκρότατον πηγαῖον ἐστί), and the Demiurge must therefore be such source (ὥστε ἀνάγκη πηγαῖον εἶναι τοῦτον τὸν δημιουργόν).

Athena is said to spring forth from Zeus (ἐκπροθοροῦσα). The verb ἐκθρῴσκω recurs in Proclus *In Parm.* III 800, 23 in a quotation from the Chaldaean Oracles (Fr. 37): the 'Intellect of the Father' (i.e. pure Nous or Kronos, the top of the paternal triad, see chapter III § 2.2, *Figure* 1) shoots forth the Forms. They all spring forth from one source (πηγῆς δὲ μιᾶς ἄπο πᾶσαι ἐξέθορον). The verb is stronger than the more neutral προιέναι (to emanate), as is also indicated by the fact that in Oracle Fr. 37 the Intellect of the Father 'shoots forth' (ἐρροίζε) the Forms that spring from him. In the case of Athena, this idea of a powerful causation is very appropriate, given the fact that she was not born as a defenceless little child, like the young Dionysus (see vss. 11-15), but as an energetic, fierce warrior from her father's head.

Tr. 3-5: ...*man-spirited, shield-bearing, of great strength, daughter from a mighty sire, Pallas, / Tritogeneia, lance-brandisher, golden-helmeted, / hearken;*

vs. 3 ἀρσενόθυμε

The adjective is attested only once more, in Nonnus *D.* 34, 352 in connection with the Maenads, who in their fury do not behave like women at all (καὶ ἀρσενόθυμον ἀνάγκην Μαινάδες ἠλλάξαντο, πάλιν δ' ἐγένοντο γυναῖκες). The heavily armed warrior Athena (spear, helmet, shield) too behaves much like a man. Cf. *Orphic Hymn* 32 (to Athena) 10: you are both of a male and female nature (ἄρσην μὲν καὶ θῆλυς ἔφυς).

vs. 3 φέρασπι, μεγασθενές, ὀβριμοπάτρη

Proclus *In Tim.* I 156, 31ff. refers with approval to Iamblichus' interpretation of the fact Athena is usually depicted with a shield and a spear (ἀσπὶς αὐτῆς ἐξήπλωται καὶ δόρυ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀγάλμασι; cf. *H.* VII 3 φέρασπι and vs. 4 δορυσσόε). According to Iamblichus, the

shield represents the powers by means of which the divine stays unaffected (ἀπαθὲς) and pure (ἄχραντον). The lances are the powers by means of which the divine spreads through the cosmos and acts upon it without touching it, i.e. without being polluted by the material realm. For Athena remaining pure, see vss. 9-10 with my commentary. For the martial appearance of Athena in general and the epithet ὀβριμοπάτρη, see commentary on vs. 4 Παλλάς.

vs. 4 Παλλάς

According to Proclus *In Crat.* § 185, p. 111, 26ff. the names Pallas and Athena refer to two different powers (δυνάμεις) of the same deity. As a protective (φρουρητικός) power, she prevents matter from mingling together with the immaterial universals (τὴν μὲν ἄχραντον φυλάττουσαν τὴν τάξιν τῶν ὅλων καὶ ἀκαταγώνιστον ὑπὸ τῆς ὕλης), as a perfecting (τελεσιουργός) power she fills everything with noeric light and turns everything towards its cause. For that reason, Socrates (Plato *Ti.* 24c7f.) celebrates her as a 'lover of war and wisdom'. In the same way, he refers to her in the same passage from the *Cratylus* (406dff.) as Pallas in so far as she is a protective power and as Athena is so far as she is a perfecting power. In Orphic mythology, Proclus notes, the protective power Pallas is armed with 'fiery weapons' (*In Crat.* p. 112, 20: τοῖς ἐμπυρίοις ὅπλοις).

Proclus returns to the description of Athena as 'lover of war and wisdom' in *Theol. Plat.* VI 11, pp. 52, 24-53, 2 and of course in his commentary to the *Timaeus*. There he explains that:

> (Athena) is a lover of war, in so far as she maintains the oppositions in the universe[5] and in so far as she is an inflexible and relentless deity. Therefore, she keeps Dionysus undefiled, fights the Giants together with her father Zeus, moves the aegis on her own accord, without orders from Zeus, and throws her lance, '*by means of which she overcomes the rows of heroes, against whom the daughter of a mighty sire* (ὀβριμοπάτρη) *bears a grudge* (*Il.* 8, 390, *Od.* 1, 100).'[6]

Most elements of Pallas the warrior recur in the first part of the hymn: the myth of the Titans and young Dionysus (vss. 11-15), the

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[5] I.e. she prevents the intelligible Forms and matter from mixing with each other.

[6] *In Tim.* I 168, 14ff.: φιλοπόλεμος δὲ ὡς τὰς ἐναντιώσεις τὰς ἐν τοῖς ὅλοις συνέχουσα καὶ ὡς ἀδάμαστος καὶ ἀμείλικτος θεός· διὸ καὶ σῴζει μὲν τὸν Διόνυσον ἄχραντον, καταγωνίζεται δὲ τοὺς Γίγαντας μετὰ τοῦ πατρός, μόνη δὲ αὕτη τὴν αἰγίδα κινεῖ μὴ τοῦ Διὸς προστάττοντος καὶ τὸ δόρυ προβέβληται, 'τῷ δάμνησι στίχας ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων, τοῖσίν τε κοτέσσεται ὀβριμοπάτρη.'

battle against the Giants (vs. 8), her lance (vs. 4), and the fact that she is a child of a mighty father (vs. 3: ὀβριμοπάτρη). For that reason, the goddess is invoked at this point of the hymn by the name of Pallas, not as Athena.

vs. 4 Τριτογένεια

Athena is traditionally called Τριτογένεια, see e.g. Homer *Il.* 4, 515; *Od.* 3, 378; Hesiod *Th.* 895; *Hom. Hymn* 28 (to Athena) 4; *Orph. Hymn* 32 (to Athena) 13. The precise meaning of the epithet has been disputed. Taillardat 1995 seems to offer the correct explanation, when he interprets it as 'first-born' (the meaning of τριτο- having changed over time from 'third' into a synonym with 'oldest', 'first').[7] He argues convincingly that this must be the meaning of the epithet at least in Hesiod *Th.* 895: Athena is the first and only child of Zeus and his first wife Mêtis, hence she is τριτογένεια, Zeus' first born child.

Proclus *In Tim.* I 166, 25-29 offers a different interpretation: Athena proceeds to the divine classes of the second and third rank (εἰς δευτέρας καὶ τρίτας αὐτὴν προϊέναι τάξεις) in order to illuminate them. Hence she is called τριτογενής. How Proclus would paraphrase the word is not exactly clear. We assume something like 'being concerned with third-born gods', rather than 'being third-born herself'.

vs. 4 δορυσσόε, χρυσεοπήληξ

For the lance of Athena, see vs. 3 φέρασπι with commentary. For the martial appearance of Athena, see commentary on vs. 4 Παλλάς. Gold is the favourite metal among the gods, see commentary to *H.* I 1 χρυσήνιε, cf. e.g. *Homeric Hymn* 28 (to Athena) 5f.: Athena Tritogeneia is born from Zeus, 'bearing her warlike arms, made of gold' (πολεμήια τεύχε' ἔχουσαν | χρύσεα).

Tr. 5-6: *accept this hymn, mistress, with a kind spirit, / do not just leave my words at the mercy of the winds, …*

vs. 5 δέχνυσο δ' ὕμνον εὔφρονι, πότνια, θυμῷ

The wish that the god invoked may lend a favourable ear to the prayers addressed to him is standard, as is the formulation εὔφρονι θυμῷ (for examples see Keyßner 1932: 87-89). Lamberton 1986: 176

[7] I owe this reference to H.D. Saffrey.

discerns an echo of Sappho Fr. 1, 4 (πότνια, θῦμον) in the words πότνια, θυμῷ. Although this possibility cannot be excluded, it should be pointed out that the resemblance is rather superficial: Sappho prays to her mistress (πότνια) not to break her (i.e. Sappho's) θυμός. Contrary to Homer and Hesiod, Sappho was not considered to be a divinely inspired poet by the Neoplatonists. If Proclus does indeed allude to her poetry, this must be purely a matter of erudition, not of literary-theurgical symbolism, as is often the case with the references to Homer and Hesiod.

vs. 6 μηδ' αὔτως ἀνέμοισιν ἐμόν ποτε μῦθον ἐάσῃς

Expression for 'saying things in vain', cf. e.g. Theocritus *Id.* 22, 167f.: ἴσκον τοιάδε πολλά, τὰ δ' εἰς ὑγρὸν ᾤχετο κῦμα, | πνοιὴ ἔχουσ' ἀνέμοιο, χάρις δ' οὐχ ἕσπετο μύθοις ('Much in such sort did I say, but the wind's breath bore my words away to the wet sea-waves and favour went not with the speech.' trans. Gow).

Tr. 7-8: *you, who opened the gates of wisdom trodden by the gods, / and overcame the tribe of the terrestrial Giants that fought the gods;*

vss. 7-8 ἡ σοφίης πετάσασα θεοστιβέας πυλεῶνας
καὶ χθονίων δαμάσασα θεημάχα φῦλα Γιγάντων·

The association of Athena with wisdom is standard, cf. Proclus *Theol. Plat.* VI 11, p. 53, 8f.: wisdom is the symbol (σύνθημα) of Athena. Although the image of a god opening the gates of insight is found nowhere else in Proclus, there is another related idea of a god holding the keys to something, i.e. having the power to grant or withhold something (see commentary to *H.* I 3). This image seems at least to imply the idea of opening some gate or door. Proclus' gates of wisdom are perhaps a faint echo of Parmenides' πύλαι of Day and Night (DK28B1, 11; 17) behind which the goddess who will reveal 'the unshaken heart of well-rounded truth and the opinions of the mortals' has her seat.

The commemoration of Athena's role in the battle between the Giants and the Olympian gods is another traditional feature in an aretology of Athena, see e.g. Orphic Hymn 32 (to Athena) 12: (Athena) Φλεγραίων ὀλέτειρα Γιγάντων (destroyer of the Phlegraian Giants). According to Apollod. *Bibl.* I 6, 1-2 (the most detailed version of the story) Athena threw the island of Sicily on Enceladus and flayed Pallas in order to use his skin to shield her own body in the

fight. For more accounts of Athena's part in that battle, see Vogt's *apparatus fontium* on this verse. The Giants were the sons of Gaia, Mother Earth (see e.g. Hesiod *Th.* 185) and are thus called 'terrestrial' (χθονίων) here.

The combination in one sentence of Athena as the one who opens the gates of wisdom and the one who slays the Giants may seem haphazard. In fact it goes back to the above-mentioned passage *Timaeus* 24c, which describes Athena as 'a lover of wisdom and a lover of war' (see commentary to vs. 4 Παλλάς). Proclus *In Tim.* I 165, 30-169, 21 offers two related interpretations of this title, one focusing on Athena as a creative force, and one on Athena as the saviour of the philosophical soul.[8]

A. Athena is a 'lover of wisdom' as far as she is the immaterial Demiurgic Thought (*In Tim.* I 166, 12-3: νόησιν οὖσαν δημιουργικὴν χωριστὴν καὶ ἄυλον), i.e. the Forms contained in the Demiurge that emanate from him in order to form the universe while remaining in him. Athena does not allow these Forms to be contaminated by matter, and in this function, she is a 'lover of war', i.e. a war against matter that constantly threatens to mingle with the immaterial Forms. In this interpretation, the Giants whom Athena fights represent the matter (cf. the discussion at vs. 4 Παλλάς and especially the citation of *In Tim.* I 168, 14ff. with discussion).

B. The war between the Olympians (the intelligible) and the Giants (the material) takes place place not only at the level of the universe as a whole, but also in the human soul. The human soul may be attracted too much to the material side of its existence (the realm of the Giants) and forget about its spiritual side (the realm of the Olympians).[9] Together with Athena as the goddess of war we can

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[8] So much related in fact, that they are confused in the discussion in *In Crat.* cited above at vs. 4.

[9] See e.g. *In Tim.* III 346, 30: 'And this is the real Gigantomachy which lends more honour to the parts in us born from Earth than to the Olympians and does not, as is the case in the universe, subject the inferior to the superior.' (καὶ οὗτος ὄντως ἐστὶν ὁ Γιγαντικὸς πόλεμος τὰ ἐν ἡμῖν γηγενῆ τῶν 'Ολυμπίων ἐντιμότερα ποιῶν καὶ οὐχ ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς ὅλοις ὑποτάττων τὰ χείρονα τοῖς ἀμείνοσιν.); *In Parm.* I 692, 24-693, 2: 'The rule of the Thirty Tyrants over Athens is itself a representation of the dominance of the earth-born or Gigantic life over the goods of Athena and the Olympians. The true warfare with the Giants takes place in souls: whenever reason and intellect rule in them, the goods of the Olympians and Athena prevail, the entire life is kingly and philosophical; but whenever the passions reign, or in general the worse and earth-born elements, then the constitution within them is tyranny.' (trans. Morrow/Dillon 1987: 71; ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ τοὺς τριάκοντα τυράννους κρατῆσαι τῶν 'Αθηνῶν ἔμφασιν ἔχει τῆς Γιγαντείου καὶ γηγενοῦς ζωῆς

fight the Giants that threaten us. As the goddess of wisdom, she illuminates us with her light of wisdom, and in that way inspires us to flee the material realm (cf. the commentary to *H.* VII 4 Παλλάς for Athena as a perfecting deity). Especially this function of Athena as a comrade in arms of the soul comes to the fore in this hymn. As the goddess of war she beheads the hounds of Hecate (the passions originating from the body, see vss. 16-7); as the goddess of wisdom she inspires us to return to the intelligible realm (vss. 32-6). The theme recurs in the prayer to Athena that concludes the *In Tim.*-passage about Athena. It runs:

> May she be gracious to us and grant us the gift of pure wisdom and the fulfilment with noeric power, while providing us with Olympic goods that elevate the souls and while banishing the Gigantic appearances produced by the world of becoming and while waking in us the pure and unperverted notions about all the gods and while shining upon us with the divine light from herself.[10]

The wisdom of Athena makes it possible for us to look through the misleading appearances (φαντάσματα) of the material world. Thanks to the notions about the divine she awakes in us,[11] we know what we should be looking for (*viz.* the divine world) to which Athena elevates us.

Tr. 9-10: *you, who guarded the unconquerable girdle of your virginity / by fleeing the desire of the amorous Hephaistos;*

vss. 9-10 ἢ πόθον Ἡφαίστοιο λιλαιομένοιο φυγοῦσα
παρθενίης ἐφύλαξας ἑῆς ἀδάμαντα χαλινόν·

Hephaistos was overcome by desire for Athena and tried to have sex with her against her will. The attempt failed (to loosen a girl's χαλινός means to deflower her, see e.g. Pi. *I.* 8, 45, something Hephaistos

κρατούσης τῶν Ἀθηναικῶν καὶ Ὀλυμπίων ἀγαθῶν· ὁ γὰρ ὄντως Γιγαντικὸς πόλεμος ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἐστι· καὶ ὅταν μὲν ἡγῆται λόγος ἐν αὐταῖς καὶ νοῦς, τὰ Ὀλύμπια καὶ τὰ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς κρατεῖ, καὶ ἡ σύμπασα ζωὴ βασιλική τίς ἐστι καὶ φιλόσοφος· ὅταν δὲ τὰ πλήθη ἢ ὅλως τὰ χείρω καὶ γηγενῆ δυναστεύῃ καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς πολιτεία, τότε τυραννίς ἐστιν.).

10 *In Tim.* I 168, 22ff.: ἡμῖν δὲ ἵλεως οὖσα μετάδοσιν παρέχοι τῆς ἀχράντου σοφίας καὶ ἀποπλήρωσιν τῆς νοερᾶς δυνάμεως, πορίζουσα μὲν τὰ Ὀλύμπια καὶ ἀναγωγὰ τῶν ψυχῶν ἀγαθά, ἐξορίζουσα δὲ τὰ Γιγάντια καὶ γενεσιουργὰ φαντάσματα καὶ ἀνεγείρουσα τὰς καθαρὰς καὶ ἀδιαστρόφους ἐν ἡμῖν περὶ ἁπάντων θεῶν ἐννοίας καὶ προσλάμπουσα τὸ θεῖον φῶς ἐξ αὐτῆς.

11 Cf. the prayers in *H.* IV 6-7 that Proclus may know well immortal god from man.

did not manage to do). His semen fell on Attic soil from which the race of the Athenians sprouted up.[12]

Proclus *In Tim.* I 144, 8-18 offers a terse symbolic interpretation of this myth: Hephaistos, when he produces the Athenians, imitates by means of sensible products Athena's noeric character.[13] He produces the material vehicles for the souls that belong to the series of Athena when they descend into the bodily existence. To my mind, this reflects two different phases in the process of causation. Athena being the Demiurgic thought (see commentary to vss. 7-8) plays an important role in the causation of the universe: she and the Demiurge arrange everything without defiling themselves (ἀχράντως) with the material world. Hephaistos in his turn, apparently on an ontologically lower level, creates material objects after the noeric models furnished by Athena. Because she keeps herself away from defilement by matter and does not mix with it, Athena is called a virgin (παρθένος) (see e.g. *In Tim.* I 169, 5-6, cf. commentary to vs. 3).

Remarkably enough, Proclus does not refer to the outcome of this failed assault of Hephaistos on Athena. There is a special bond of *sympatheia* between the Athenians and Athena, exactly because she is, in a way, partially responsible for the creation of the Athenians. To mention this fact would activate this bond (see the discussion of mythical *symbola* in chapter V § 3.3). It is precisely with this intention that Proclus recalls that the acropolis is a symbol of Athena (vs. 22), and that Attica is thus under the influence of Athena. The reason for this omission is, I surmise, the fact that, although Proclus belongs to the series of Athena by birth (see vs. 42 with my commentary), he is not a native Athenian. Therefore he lacks the symbols that characterize someone born in Attica. As a result, Proclus cannot establish any bond of *sympatheia* on this particular basis.

Tr. 11-15: *you, who saved the heart, which had not been cut to small pieces, of lord Bacchus in the vault of heaven, when he was once torn apart by the hands of the Titans, and brought it to his father, / in order that,*

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[12] Olympiodorus *In Gorg.* 44, 3, p. 229, 1ff. ed. Westerink rejects the story as something 'mythical and entirely foolish.' For other ancient accounts of the story, see Vogt's *apparatus fontium* ad loc.

[13] *In Tim.* I 144, 8ff.: ἐπεὶ καὶ κατὰ τὸν μῦθον ὁ Ἥφαιστος ἐρῶν τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἀφῆκε τὸ σπέρμα εἰς γῆν, καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἐβλάστησε τὸ τῶν Ἀθηναίων γένος. ἀεὶ μὲν οὖν ὁ Ἥφαιστος καὶ ὅλως ἐρᾷ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς τὸ νοερὸν αὐτῆς τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς ἔργοις μιμούμενος. The interpretation of τὸ νοερόν as 'noeric character' derives from the translation by Festugière *In Tim.* I 1966: 193.

through the ineffable wishes of his begetter, / a new Dionysus would grow again from Semele around the cosmos;

vss. 11-15 ἣ κραδίην ἐσάωσας ἀμιστύλλευτον ἄνακτος
αἰθέρος ἐν γυάλοισι μεριζομένου ποτὲ Βάκχου
Τιτήνων ὑπὸ χερσί, πόρες δέ ἑ πατρὶ φέρουσα,
ὄφρα νέος βουλῆσιν ὑπ' ἀρρήτοισι τοκῆος
ἐκ Σεμέλης περὶ κόσμον ἀνηβήσῃ Διόνυσος·

1. *The myth*

These verses refer to the famous Orphic myth of Dionysus. The Titans once deceived the young Dionysus with a mirror and other playthings. After they had caught him, they cut him into seven pieces (μεριζομένου ποτὲ Βάκχου Τιτήνων ὑπὸ χερσί). Only the heart (κραδίη) was rescued intact (ἀμιστύλλευτος) by Athena. It was even still beating. She carried it off to Zeus (πόρες δέ ἑ πατρὶ φέρουσα). According to one version of the story, apparently followed here by Proclus, Zeus had a soup made from it and served it to Semele who thus became pregnant from Dionysus and gave birth to him (ἐκ Σεμέλης περὶ κόσμον ἀνηβήσῃ Διόνυσος).[14]

2. *Allegorical interpretations*

Like the myth of the gigantomachy, this story was interpreted allegorically in antiquity. Pépin 1970 lists four different kinds of interpretations, two of which occur in Proclus:

1 *naturalist exegeses*[15] (not found in Proclus), e.g. the interpretation in which the myth is understood to be about wine-making.
2 *cosmological exegesis*[16] (not found in Proclus): the myth is about the cycles of ἐκπυρώσεις and διακοσμήσεις.

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[14] Story according to West 1983: 140-164, who lists the sources for his reconstruction. He claims that the version in which Semele gives birth to Dionysus is clearly not Orphic. It was designed to reconcile the story that Dionysus was the son of Persephone, killed by the Titans, with the story (ignored by Orphic theogonies as far as we can see) that he was the son of Semele, born amid lightning. The version that West believes to be probably Orphic says that Zeus made an image of Dionysus and placed the heart in it. However, since Proclus, who had himself been initiated into the Orphic teachings, refers to the former version, we must assume that at least at some late stage the version that features Semele was accepted by some Orphics.

[15] Pépin 1970: 306-7

[16] Pépin 1970: 307-8

3 *metaphysical exegesis*[17] (found in Proclus): according to this interpretation the body of Dionysus is the cosmic soul, whereas his heart is the cosmic Intellect.[18] The body cut up into pieces symbolizes the discursive way in which Soul contemplates the Ideas as opposed to the unitary way in which Intellect works, which is symbolized by the fact that the heart is preserved intact by Athena.[19]

4 *spiritual exegesis*[20] (found in Proclus): this interpretation is, as Damascius *In Phd.* I § 129 observes, an adaptation of (3) the metaphysical one on the level of the individual soul. The emotions and irrational powers (the Titans) that come with living in a body distract the attention of the soul from the metaphysical realm, characterized by unity, towards the realm of matter, characterized by plurality, thus scattering the particular soul (the body of Dionysus). However, our intellect (the heart) remains intact. The right use of intellect may, with the help of Athena, enable the *epistrophe* of our soul towards the world of unity away from the world of matter.[21] We need the help of

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17 Pépin 1970: 308-310.

18 *In Tim.* II 146, 1f.: οὐ μέντοι πᾶς νοῦς, ἀλλ' ὁ ἐγκόσμιος· οὗτος γάρ ἐστιν ἡ καρδία ἡ ἀμέριστος.

19 To quote one passage in which Proclus gives this interpretation: '...[T]he One is one only and precedes thought, Intellect thinks all Ideas as one, and Soul sees them all one by one. So division is the peculiar function of Soul, since she lacks the power of thinking all things simultaneously in unity and has been alloted the thinking of them all separately — all, because she imitates Intellect, and separately, for this is her peculiar property; for the power to divide and define appears first in Soul. This is why the theologians say that at the dismemberment of Dionysus his intellect was preserved undivided through the foresight of Athena and that his soul was the first to be divided, and certainly the division into seven is proper primarily to Soul. It is therefore appropriate that Soul should have the the function of division and of seeing things discursively.' (*In Parm.* III 808, 25-809, 1; trans. after Morrow/Dillon). For other instances of this interpretation in Proclus, see *In Tim.* II 145, 4ff., *In Crat.* § 182, p. 109, 16ff. Pépin 1970: 309f. lists occurrences in Origen, Alexander of Lycopolis, Julian, Macrobius and John Lydus.

20 Pépin 1970: 310-2

21 Proclus *In Alc.* 43, 24ff. provides a nice example of such an interpretation: Alcibiades is on the level of rational soul, a mode of existence, '...to which the emotions and the irrational powers are still attached, attacking, as it were, the rational life, and, like the Titans, trying to tear it asunder. Intellect, on the other hand, is established over the soul, like Athena, lifting it up away from the inclination and the motion towards the material world. For it is typical for Athena to preserve the undivided life. For this reason Pallas Athena is called Saviour. It is, however, typical for the Titans to divide the soul and to call it to the world of becoming.' (ἀνάγκη τοίνυν κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἄκρων ἀναλογίαν καὶ τὸν Ἀλκιβιάδην ἐν ψυχῇ λογικῇ τάττειν, ἧς ἐξήρτηται μὲν ἔτι τὰ πάθη καὶ αἱ ἄλογοι δυνάμεις, οἷον ἐπιβουλεύουσαι τῇ λογικῇ ζωῇ καὶ Τιτανικῶς αὐτὴν ἐπιχειροῦσαι σπαράττειν,

> Athena in this. She places our personal, partial intellect in the total intellections of Zeus, the Demiurge (in mythical language: she brings the heart of the scattered body to Zeus, see commentary to vs. 32). These are the intellections of the transcendent Forms, which Zeus alone, being the divine Intellect, can contemplate.

Which interpretation is the most meaningful in the context of the this hymn? Vogt, in his *apparatus fontium*, only lists examples from Proclus of the metaphysical interpretation. It remains unclear whether Vogt wants to exclude the spiritual interpretation or that he just did not notice it. Segonds *In Alc.* vol. I 1985: 147 n. 5 to p. 35 seems to conflate the metaphysical and the spiritual interpretations. The metaphysical interpretation is triggered by the proceeding part of the hymn, which extols Athena as the great warrior who maintains the opposites in the universe, and by vs. 15 (περὶ κόσμον), which clearly implies a metaphysical reading of the myth. On the other hand, we should not completely forget about the spiritual exegesis. In the first part of his petition (vss. 32-6), Proclus asks Athena to do to him what she also does on a cosmic scale: to harbour his personal, partial intellect in the intellections of Zeus (see my commentary *ad loc.*).

3. *Commentary on details vss.* 11-15

ἀμιστύλλευτον

The heart of Dionysus was saved intact according to the myth (see § 1. *The myth* above). The use of the rare adjective ἀμιστύλλευτος is remarkable. As a TLG index-search reveals, it occurs only here, in a Chaldaean Oracle (Fr. 152) as quoted by Proclus *In Crat.* § 107, p. 59, 2, and seven times in Damascius.[22] Both in Proclus *In Crat.* and Damascius *In Parm.* this adjective is attached to pure Nous only, i.e. Kronos,[23] because it transcends the material world and it is turned

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ὑπερίδρυται δὲ ὁ νοῦς Ἀθηναϊκῶς ἀνέχων αὐτὴν ἀπὸ τῆς ῥοπῆς καὶ τῆς εἰς τὸ ἔνυλον φορᾶς. Ἀθηναϊκὸν γὰρ τὸ σώζειν ἀμέριστον τὴν ζωήν, ἐξ οὗπερ Σώτειρ' ἐπεκλήθη Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη Τιτανικὸν δὲ τὸ μερίζειν αὐτὴν καὶ προκαλεῖσθαι περὶ τὴν γένεσιν). The same interpretation is repeated at *In Alc.* 104, 26ff., *In Crat.* § 133, pp. 77, 24-78, 3. Other occurrences of the same interpretation: Plotinus *Enn.* IV 3 [27] 12, 1ff., Damascius *In Phd.* I § 129-130, Olympiod. *In Phd.* A, I 5-6, VII, 10.

[22] Damascius *In Parm.* I 67, 23 ed. Westerink-Combès, I 94, 14 ed. Westerink-Combès, II 37, 27 ed. Westerink-Combès, II 133, 16 ed. Ruelle, II 137, 27 ed. Ruelle, II 148, 11 ed. Ruelle.

[23] Cf. the note by Combès to *In Parm.* I 67, 23 ed. Westerink-Combès (Westerink-Combès vol. I 1997: 141).

towards itself, whereas the Demiurgic Nous, i.e. Zeus, orders the material world and exercises providence towards what is inferior to it.[24] Kronos stays thus free from the plurality involved in the material cosmos, and therefore maintains his unity. The fact that Proclus uses it here in connection with the heart of Dionysus comes therefore as somewhat of a surprise, for in this context Dionysus' heart has to be either the encosmic intellect (in the metaphysical exegesis) or the individual intellect (in the spiritual exegesis). Both are examples of nous connected to this material world of plurality. Perhaps Proclus transposes this adjective from the highest form of Nous to a lower one in order to underscore the fact that nous has a higher degree of unity than soul, be it the encosmic nous versus the cosmic soul or the individual nous versus the individual soul.

αἰθέρος ἐν γυάλοισι

The expression means 'the vault of heaven' (L.-S.-J. *s.v.* γύαλον 4). It returns literally in *Orphic Hymn* 19 (to Zeus the thunderbold) 16: σμαραγεῖ δὲ κεραυνὸς| αἰθέρος ἐν γυάλοισι. However, this does not necessarily imply that Proclus borrowed the expression from this hymn. They may both go back to a common (Orphic) source.

Nous is, of course, without place. We should therefore be careful not to take 'the vault of heaven' as a physical location, i.e. as the region of aether, the highest section of the subcelestial realm. Aether here does not refer to the special kind of fire which Proclus believed the heavens were made of, but to the divine realm as opposed to the world of becoming. For this opposition, see e.g. Proclus *In RP.* I 17, 23ff. in which a distinction is made between the realm of *genesis* and the realm transcending that of *genesis* which is described as 'aetherial' (αἰθέριος).

μεριζομένου

The verb μερίζω is a standard term in discussions about the nature of soul as opposed to nous. Nous is often defined in Proclus as an ἀμέριστος οὐσία[25] in contrast to soul.[26] Proclus *In Tim.* II 146, 3ff. (a

24 *In Crat.* § 107, p. 57, 5ff.

25 See e.g. Proclus *El.* § 171, p. 150, 1-14; the expression stems from Plato *Ti.* 35a1-3.

26 See e.g. Proclus *El.* § 191, p. 166, 29-31: no participated soul can have both an eternal existence and an eternal activity, because in that case 'it will be undivided being (ἀμέριστος οὐσία), and there will be nothing to distinguish the psychic nature (ἡ ψυχῆς φύσις) from intellectual substance (τῆς νοερᾶς ὑποστάσεως), the

metaphysical exegesis of the Dionysus-myth) says that Orpheus 'calls the nous the undivided being of Dionysus' (τὸν μὲν δὴ νοῦν ἀμέριστον οὐσίαν τοῦ Διονύσου καλεῖ), whereas Dionysus' body, i.e. soul, is divided (μεριστός). According to the spiritual exegesis of the myth it is said to be typical for the Titans to divide the soul (*In Alc.* 44, 3f.: Τιτανικὸν δὲ τὸ μερίζειν).

νέος

According to Proclus, νέος (young) is an Orphic epithet for Dionysus as the monad of the second group of demiurges (*In Tim.* III 310, 29ff.). He is called young, because he comes after the intelligible and paternal orders (*In Parm.* I 686, 36-687, 3).

βουλῇσιν ὑπ' ἀρρήτοισι τοκῆος

The intellections of Zeus, the Demiurgic Nous, are unknowable to the human soul (see chapter III § 4.1). For this reason, they are ineffable (ἄρρητος).

περὶ κόσμον

How to translate περί in vs. 15? Most translators takes it as young Dionysus growing around *in* the cosmos, thus extending throughout it (Giordano 1957: 47: per il mondo refiorisse; Meunier 1935: 102: un nouveau Dionysus … refleurit par le monde; Saffrey 1994: 49: dans le cosmos). This does not match Proclus' metaphysical interpretation of the myth. In his interpretation it is the cut up body of Dionysus that extends itself throughout the universe. See Proclus *In Tim.* II 146, 14-18:

> καὶ τάχα ἂν τὸ διὰ παντὸς τοῦ κόσμου τεταμένην εἶναι τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ Τιτανικοῦ μερισμοῦ τοὺς Ὀρφικοὺς ἀναμιμνήσκοι, δι' ὃν οὐ μόνον <u>ἡ ψυχὴ περικαλύπτει τὸ πᾶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τέταται δι' αὐτοῦ παντός.</u>
>
> And the fact that the soul has been stretched throughout the whole cosmos may perhaps remind the Orphics of the Titanic division, as a result of which the soul does not only cover the universe all around but is also stretched out through the whole of it.

Here, however, we are not dealing with a Dionysus divided but, on the contrary, with a Dionysus reunited again. So translations like 'in the cosmos' or 'through the cosmos' do not express what Proclus means.

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self-moved principle from the unmoved.'

On the other hand, the passage quoted also contains an indication that 'growing round the cosmos' is the correct translation, because Dionysus, even before he is divided, is supposed to cover the universe all around (περικαλύπτει). We should note that Proclus refers here to Plato *Ti.* 34b3f. διά παντός τε ἔτεινεν καὶ ἔτι ἔξωθεν τὸ σῶμα αὐτῇ περιεκάλυψεν. He observes in regard to Plato's use of περικαλύπτειν that it 'indicates the fact that the soul embraces the cosmos from all sides and that the cosmos is unified by the soul and brought to one life and that soul has left nothing outside its own providence and that there is nothing bereft of it.'[27] This passage once more brings out the fact that the idea of soul/Dionysus encircling the cosmos implies unity, for this manifestation of soul leads even the whole cosmos to one unified mode of existence.

Tr. 16-7: *your axe, by cutting off by the roots the heads of all-seeing Hecate's / animals of passions, put asleep the process of becoming;*

vs. 16 ἧς πέλεκυς

I have not succeeded in finding any text nor of any representation of Athena wielding an axe. Her normal weapon is a spear (cf. vs. 4: δορυσσόε). Nor do I know of any myth in which Athena hacks off the heads of animals that belong to Hecate. Neither did Wilamowitz 1907: 273 n. 4, who confessed he did not understand these verses. Norden 1913: 171 n. 1 even argues that the vss. 16-17 are an interpolation, because one can hardly make sense of them and because they begin with ἧς instead of ἥ as the rest of the cola that make up the aretology. Norden's arguments for deletion of these verses do not carry much conviction. The many-headed beast and Hecate as a dangerous goddess are familiar figures for the Neoplatonists. We can understand these verses even without a complete parallel in extant Greek texts. The remark about the use of the genitive instead of a nominative only shows that Norden and Proclus differ in literary taste, or that the composer at work does not belong to the premier league of Greek poets.

Is Proclus perhaps making up the story just for the occasion? The animal heads symbolize the passions that threaten the human soul (see commentary to vss. 16-17). Athena is reputed for fighting off the

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[27] *In Tim.* II 108, 29ff.: τὸ γὰρ περικαλύψαι τὸ περισχεῖν ἁπανταχόθεν τὸν κόσμον καὶ δι' ἑαυτῆς αὐτὸν ἑνῶσαι καὶ εἰς μίαν ζωὴν ἀναγαγεῖν ἐνδείκνυται καὶ τὸ μηδὲν ἔξω τῆς οἰκείας ἀφεῖναι προνοίας μηδὲ ἔρημον αὐτῆς.

passions (see commentary to vs. 8). To arm her with an axe fits the logic of the story. The traditional spear is after all of no avail to behead these monsters, whereas an axe seems to be just the tool for the job (cf. the verb πελακίζω: 'cut off with an axe', esp. 'behead', think also of the practice in Antiquity of killing the victims for an offering with a blow of an axe in the neck).

vss. 16-7 θήρεια ταμὼν προθέλυμνα κάρηνα
πανδερκοῦς Ἑκάτης παθέων, ηὔνησε γενέθλην

How should we construct this sentence? Should we put a comma between κάρηνα and πανδερκοῦς Ἑκάτης (so Ludwig 1897: 152; Vogt 1957: 32) or take them together (so Cousin 1864: 1321; Giordano 1957: 46; Saffrey 1994: 48) and if so, how should we interpret it (Giordano 1957: 47 'le teste dei monstri nati da Ecate onniveggente'; Meunier 1935: 102 'les solides têtes des monstres qu' enfanta Hécate qui voit tout'; Saffrey 1994: 49 'têtes bestiales d'Hécate qui voit tout')?

To start with, to whom do these heads belong? In any case probably not to Hecate. Although she may be depicted with two or three faces,[28] she is to the best of my knowledge never portrayed with animal heads. Vogt gives a lead here in his *apparatus fontium* with a reference to the changeful and many-headed animal (θηρίον ποικίλον καὶ πολυκεφάλον) in Plato *R.* 588c7f. There, the many-headed animal represents the irrational part of the soul in which the emotions are located. Proclus paraphrases: 'In any of us is a many-headed animal. ... It is the manifold, irrational and material kind of soul.'[29] These animals are a threat, described by Proclus in a very picturesque way in *In RP.* II 126, 8ff.: Every soul aims at ascending towards the gods, to Mt. Olympus (cf. commentary to vs. 36), away from the material realm. Unfortunately, the πάθη that go with the bodily existence make us heavy and drag us down, if we have failed to master them. 'Some are drawn down by the irrational and fierce creatures that have grown in them to the chthonic place that suits these monsters.'[30] As Festugière comments in a note to his translation, these creatures are the many-headed beasts of the *Republic.*[31] We

[28] For this anomalous anatomy of Hecate, see commentary on H. VI 3 *s.v.* Ἴανε.

[29] *In Alc.* 244, 3ff. καὶ ἐν ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἐστί τι πολυκέφαλον θηρίον ... τὸ ποικίλον καὶ ἄλογον καὶ ἔνυλον εἶδος τῆς ψυχῆς.

[30] *In RP.* II 126, 30ff. κατασπῶνται δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν ηὐξημένων τινὲς ἐν αὐταῖς ἀλόγων καὶ ἀγρίων θρεμμάτων εἰς τὸν ἐκείνοις οἰκεῖον τόπον τὸν χθόνιον

[31] Festugière 1970 v. III 70 n. 4.

may conclude that the θήρεια κάρηνα are the heads of our passions (παθέων).

The chthonic realm, the place where the bad souls are punished, belongs to Hecate. In the context of the Chaldaean Oracles, the passions that drag us down to it are often portrayed as avenging daemons, called the 'dogs of Hecate'.[32] There is, however, no suggestion that Hecate is their mother, *pace* Giordano and Meunier. The heads, then, do not belong to Hecate, but to her animals.

We cannot fool Hecate. If we have lived a life of passions, we will get what we deserve, for she sees everything (πανδερκοῦς), cf. *H.* I 37-8, for the same idea that we cannot escape punishment (Ποινῶν), since the eye of Justice sees everything (ὄμμα Δίκης, ἣ πάντα δέδορκεν). If, on the other hand, we manage to get rid of the passions we may leave the material realm behind and go to Mt. Olympus. In this way, the process of becoming is (temporarily) put to an end for the ascended soul (ηὔνησε γενέθλην).

Athena does not have anything to do with Hecate in Greek mythology. However, she is the great champion in the struggle against the material and the irrational, and for that reason a great help to us in our fight against the irrational within us.

Tr. 18-20: *you, who loved the revered power of the virtues that wake up the mortals; / you, who adorned our whole life with many kinds of skills / by casting noeric craftsmanship into souls;*

vs. 18 ἣ κράτος ἤραο σεμνὸν ἐγερσιβρότων ἀρετάων·
Athena is universal Virtue (ἀρετή). According to the Chaldaean Oracles Soul gushes from the right flank of Hecate, whereas from Virtue springs her left flank. Proclus equates Hecate with Artemis, Soul with Persephone, and Virtue with Athena, see *Theol. Plat.* VI 11, p. 51, 19-28.[33] For Athena as universal Virtue, see also *In Tim.* I 166, 27; 170, 3-10. Athena is Virtue because she is Wisdom (σοφία), for if the most important virtues (αἱ πρώτισται τῶν ἀρετῶν) are forms of *episteme*, wisdom (being superior to *episteme*), must be the primary cause of all virtues (*Theol. Plat.* VI 11, p. 53, 8-12). Proclus refers here to the Socratic thesis that knowledge is virtue. To be more precise, Proclus has the so-called contemplative virtues in mind, as he

[32] On the Chaldaean daemon-dogs, see Johnston 1990: 134-142.
[33] For the Chaldaean Oracles in question (Frr. 51 and 52) see introduction to *H.* VI § 1.2.

indicates by calling them αἱ πρώτισται, see Saffrey-Westerink *Theol. Plat.* VI p. 153 n. 2 to p. 53. Since these contemplative virtues turn the soul towards the intelligible realm, they are called here ἐγερσιβρότοι, for they awaken the human soul towards the intelligible life, see commentary to *H.* III 4 ἐγερσινόων βίβλων.

The link between contemplative virtue and wisdom recurs in Marinus *Vita Procli*, which is itself modelled after the Neoplatonic *scala virtutum.*[34] According to *Vita Procli* § 22, Proclus 'reached that virtue (ἀρετή) which could no longer be called *phronesis* proper, but rather *sophia* (wisdom) or even some more reverent name.' This wisdom consisted in 'seeing by his own eyes those truly blessed visions of Reality, no longer obtaining this knowledge by reasoning or demonstration, but as if by vision and simple and immediate perceptions of the intuitive activity[35] viewing the ideal forms in the divine mind' (trans. after Rosán 1949: 25).

vss. 18-9 ἢ βίοτον κόσμησας ὅλον πολυειδέσι τέχναις
δημιοεργείην νοερὴν ψυχαῖσι βαλοῦσα·

Athena is traditionally the patron deity of handicrafts (τέχναι). See e.g. *Orphic Hymn* 32 (to Athena) 8: τεχνῶν μῆτερ πολύολβε. These include weaving,[36] but go beyond the traditional activities of women to e.g. carpentry, metalworking, and all sorts of technology (see *OCD* 1996[3]: 201 *s.v.* Athena). Hence these handicrafts are πολυειδής (of many kinds).

The handicrafts we use in everyday life (βίοτος) are an emanation of the divine creative activity at the intelligible level (δημιοεργείην νοερήν). To take weaving as an example: Athena weaves 'in a demiurgic fashion' (δημιουργικῶς) the fabric of the intelligible Forms. Although this is the archetype of the art of weaving, it differs significantly from the art of weaving as we know it. The latter has some demi-goddess in the train of Athena as its patron (see Proclus *In Parm.* III 829, 8-21). For the idea that we partake in the handicrafts of the gods by means of an intermediary divine being, cf. *Theol. Plat.* V 24, pp. 87, 22-88, 11 (Prometheus is such an intermediary between the divine craftsmen Athena and Hephaistos); for Athena as a

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[34] On the fact that the *Vita Procli* is modeled after the Neoplatonic *scala virtutum*, see Blumenthal 1984.

[35] Reading ἁπλαῖς ἐπιβολαῖς τῆς νοερᾶς ἐνεργείας, the text is disputed.

[36] For the association in Greek mythology of Athena with weaving especially, see Proclus *In Crat.* § 53, p. 21, 21ff.

demiurgic force weaving together the Forms, see *In Tim.* I 135, 6-15; 168, 30-169, 5 (Athena is celebrated as the Worker (Ἐργάνη) because she presides over the demiurgic works (τῶν δημιουργικῶν ἔργων προστάτις).

Tr. 21-22: *you, who obtained the Acropolis on the high-crested hill, / a symbol, mistress, of the top of your great series;*

vss. 21-22 ἣ λάχες ἀκροπόληα καθ' ὑψιλόφοιο κολώνης,
σύμβολον ἀκροτάτης μεγάλης σέο, πότνια, σειρῆς·

In Plato *Ti.* 23d6-7, Athena is said to have received the cities of Saïs and Athens by lot (Ἥ τήν τε ὑμετέραν καὶ τήνδε ἔλαχεν καὶ ἔθρεψεν καὶ ἐπαίδευσε). Proclus discusses at length what is meant by 'receiving by lot' (τὸ δὲ λαχεῖν τοῦτο τί ποτέ ἐστι, *In Tim.* I 136, 9f.). The god to whom an area belongs exercises providence and care towards that region. This divine care takes the form of illumination. The extent of illumination depends on the aptitude of the region to receive it. This aptitude is determined by the course of the celestial bodies and the 'universal nature placing divine symbols (συνθήματα θεῖα) in each of the illuminated regions, by means of which they partake spontaneously in the gods (for inasmuch as nature depends on the gods, she places different images (εἰκόνας) of them in different things).'[37] So here the same principle of symbolism by means of συνθήματα/-εἰκόνες/σύμβολα that underlies theurgical practice is put to work in the case of entire regions.

In the case of Attica, Athena has received it as her lot (λάχες). A symbol (σύμβολον) of this is the acropolis. Proclus sums up some results of Athena's care for the city: Athena has given the city her name, the city is famous for its thinking (vs. 25), and has received the sacred olive-tree (vs. 27).

The acropolis of Athens is an excellent symbol for Athena. Athena has the highest position in her series of causation, just as the acropolis is the highest point in Athens. Its elevated position is underlined by the use of the poetic adjective ὑψιλόφος (see e.g. Pindar *O.* 13, 111, said of Mt. Etna). For Athena as the top of her series, see commentary to vss. 1-2.

Athena, as the top of her series, is its mistress (πότνια). According to Proclus *Theol. Plat.* VI 11, p. 52, 3, Plato *Lg.* 796b6 calls Athena

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[37] *In Tim.* I 139, 25-29.

δέσποινα because of her dominating position. He frequently refers to Athena as 'our mistress'; see *Theol. Plat.* VI 11, p. 52, 29 (ἡ δέσποινα ἡμῶν) with Saffrey-Westerink's note p. 152 n. 3 to p. 52 for other parallels cf. vs. 5 πότνια. Athena is Proclus' mistress for two reasons: Proclus belongs to Athena's series (see vs. 42 with my commentary) and, as a philosopher, he is under Athena's patronage.

Tr. 23-30: *you who loved the man-feeding land, a mother of books, / strongly resisting the holy desire of your father's brother, and granted the city to have your name and noble mind — / there, under the top edge of the mountain, you made an olive-tree / sprout up as a manifest sign of that battle for posterity too, / when an immense gulf stirred up from the sea came upon the children of Cecrops, directed by Poseidon, / lashing all things with its loud-roaring streams.*

vss. 23-30 ἣ χθόνα βωτιάνειραν ἐφίλαο, μητέρα βίβλων,
πατροκασιγνήτοιο βιησαμένη πόθον ἱρόν,
οὔνομα δ' ἄστεϊ δῶκας ἔχειν σέο καὶ φρένας ἐσθλάς·
ἔνθα μάχης ἀρίδηλον ὑπὸ σφυρὸν οὔρεος ἄκρον
σῆμα καὶ ὀψιγόνοισιν ἀνεβλάστησας ἐλαίην,
εὖτ' ἐπὶ Κεκροπίδῃσι Ποσειδάωνος ἀγωγῇ
μυρίον ἐκ πόντοιο κυκώμενον ἤλυθε κῦμα,
πάντα πολυφλοίσβοισιν ἑοῖς ῥεέθροισιν ἱμάσσον.

1. *The myth*

In vss. 24-30, Proclus takes up the theme of the myth of the battle for Attica between Athena and Poseidon, the brother of Zeus, Athena's father (vs. 24 πατροκασίγνητος). Both deities longed to have it (vs. 23 ἐφίλαο, vs. 25 πόθον ἱρόν). In order to mark it as his possession, Poseidon struck the Acropolis with his trident and produced a spring. Athena, in her turn, planted an olive-tree at the same location (vss. 26-27). Athena's claim was successful. The city of Athens was hers and thus named after her (vs. 25 οὔνομα δ' ἄστεϊ δῶκας ἔχειν σέο). In a not very sporting reaction, the angry Poseidon flooded the Thriasian plain and laid Attica (temporarily) under the sea (vss. 28-30).[38]

[38] See Apoll. III 14, 1; for further accounts of the story, see note Frazer in his Loeb translation vol. II 1921: 78 n. 1.

2. *Allegorical interpretation*
Proclus explains this myth in terms of the struggle between the intelligible realm and that of generation, as he does in the case of Athena' battle against the Giants and her rescue operation of the heart of Dionysus in order to block the evil plans of the Titans (see vss. 8; 11-15 with my commentary):

> Even now, the victory of Athena is celebrated by the Athenians, and they have a festival because Poseidon has been overcome by Athena and because the order of generation has been overpowered by the noeric one and because the inhabitants of that region, once the necessary things had been taken care of, rushed towards the noeric life. For Poseidon is considered to be the leader of generation, Athena, on the other hand, to be the guardian of the noeric life.[39]

Proclus does not mention the flooding of Attica by Poseidon in the text just cited. I assume, however, that we should take this element allegorically too. Water is a symbol for generation, especially in the form of roaring gulfs (see vs. 29: κῦμα, vs. 20: πολυφλοίσβοισιν ῥεέθροισιν; cf. *H.* I 30). Perhaps we should interpret it as a symbol of the continuing threat of the material world even when we have turned ourselves towards the philosophical life.

3. *Commentary on details vss.* 23-30
μητέρα βίβλων
Saffrey-Westerink 1968 *Theol. Plat.* I p. XLVIII n. 2 suggest that Proclus uses this title to honour Athens not only as the city that had produced so many famous authors of books, but also because — after the destruction of the library of Alexandria — it was *the* place where the patrimony of Greek literature could be found.

In a later article, Saffrey 1992^{b}: 170 offers a more positive and attractive explanation for this title than the former grandeur of Athens or the destruction of the library of Alexandria. He remarks: 'Cette acclamation: 'Mère des livres' ne se comprend, à mon avis, que dans le contexte particulier de ce moment de l'histoire d'Athènes.' According to Saffrey, Athens was buzzing with literary activities at the

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[39] *In Tim.* I 173, 9-15: ἔτι τοίνυν τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς τὰ νικητήρια παρὰ Ἀθηναίοις ἀνύμνηται, καὶ ἑορτὴν ποιοῦνται ταύτην ὡς τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος ὑπὸ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς νενικημένου καὶ ὡς τῆς γενεσιουργοῦ τάξεως ὑπὸ τῆς νοερᾶς κεκρατημένης καὶ ὡς μετὰ τὴν τῶν ἀναγκαίων κατασκευὴν τῶν οἰκούντων τὴν χώραν ταύτην ἐπὶ τὴν κατὰ νοῦν ὁρμησάντων ζωήν· γενέσεως γὰρ εἶναι τὸν Ποσειδῶνα προστάτην, νοερᾶς δὲ ζωῆς ἔφορον τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν.

beginning of the fifth century: Rhetoricians drew large crowds together at their performances. The library of Hadrian, which had suffered badly from the invasions in 267 and 396, had been restored at the beginning of the fifth century. The activities of its librarian Philtatios indicate that at that time the collections of texts were being renewed. From remarks by Synesius and Proclus, Saffrey deduces furthermore that there were different versions of texts readily available, so that corrupted texts could be corrected.

οὔνομα δ' ἄστεϊ δῶκας ἔχειν σέο καὶ φρένας ἐσθλάς·
As explained above (see my comments on vss. 21-22), Athena illuminates the areas that have been allotted to her. Proclus continues his discussion referred to above by observing that a city that consecrates itself to its deity, be it by means of theurgy or legislation, will show a life like that of its patron deity and will manage better to perform great and marvellous works than cities which do not take the nature of their patron deity into consideration. The Athenians consecrated their city to Athena, as is shown by the fact that the city bears her name. As a result, Athens resembles Athena, 'the lover of war and wisdom': the city is not only covered with military glory (albeit in Proclus' days this was very much in the past) but has also hosted many famous philosophers over the centuries up until Proclus' own days (including many Platonists), who are truly noble minds (φρένας ἐσθλάς).

ὑπὸ σφυρὸν οὔρεος ἄκρον
The sacred olive-tree stood at the west front of the Erechteion in the Pandroseion,[40] which is more or less on the top of the Acropolis. In the Erechteion itself, Poseidon's marks were on display: the imprint of his trident and a salt water well. Proclus locates the tree ὑπὸ σφυρὸν οὔρεος ἄκρον. Although he lived at the foot of the acropolis, and thus must have known the area like the back of his hand, the translators do not seem to take the geography of the acropolis into account: Meunier 1935: 103 (sous l'éperon de la montagne) suggests that the olive-tree was situated at the foot of the acropolis, as does Giordano 1957: 47 ('sotto l'alta pendice del colle'). Saffrey 1994: 51

[40] See Apollod. III 14, 1: 'ἐφύτευσαν ἐλαίαν, ἣ νῦν ἐν τῷ Πανδροσείῳ δείκνυται', for further sources, see note Frazer *ad loc.* in his Loeb translation (1921), for a map see Stevens 1927 plate I.

('à la pointe extrême du rocher'), situates it on the top of the hill, however 'à' is an unusual translation of the Greek ὑπό, and the Pandroseion is not situated on the edge of the rock. I suggest the following interpretation. The plateau which forms the top of the acropolis is not completely flat. This is particularly clear on the location of the Erechteion, which had especially been designed to fit the uneven ground. Its north porch is situated meters below the famous south porch of the Caryatids, which is on the top level of the acropolis.[41] The Pandroseion is situated on the same level as the north porch. At the side of the Pandroseion, a terrace wall, erected there to separate the higher from the lower level, accentuates the difference in altitude. The Pandroseion, then, is situated under the edge of the utmost top of the acropolis, but still at the top of the acropolis and not at the foot of it.

σῆμα καὶ ὀψιγόνοισιν ἀνεβλάστησας ἐλαίην
The sacred olive-tree marked Athena's claim on Attica in her contest with Poseidon. The addition 'καὶ ὀψιγόνοισιν' seems to imply that at the time of the composition of this hymn, the olive-tree had not yet fallen victim to the axes of the Christians but was still there to bear witness to Athena's victory. Wilamowitz 1907: 273 holds an opposite view: 'Da sind die alten echten Male vergessen: das Erechteion und Pandroseion werden schon entweiht gewesen sein.' However, Proclus refers here to mythical times in which there was not yet any temple on the acropolis. He does not forget them, but passes them over because they have no function in the story. The really old monument is the olive-tree, the temples are just later additions.

One wonders whether Proclus thinks that Athena's olive-tree has some allegorical significance. He does not mention any in his writings. Porphyry *Antr.* 32-33 does so in the case of the olive-tree in *Od.* 13, 102. In the context of his allegorical exegesis of the cave of the nymphs, the olive-tree is a symbol of the divine wisdom (Athena) that created the cosmos. An allegorical interpretation along these lines fits the context of this hymn. Proclus has hinted after all at other myths, which he interprets as symbolical accounts of Athena's demiurgic activities (see vss. 7-8; 9-10; 11-15). However, Proclus may

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[41] For detailed drawings of this situation at the west side of the Erechteion that gives out into the Pandroseion, see Stevens 1927: Plate IV (west elevation) and Plate XIII (west elevation restored).

as well have chosen not to accept Porphyry's allegorical interpretation of the olive-tree in the description of the cave of the nymphs.

Κεκροπίδῃσι
The Κεκροπίδαι are the descendants of Cecrops, a mythical king of Athens. Although according to most accounts not the first king, he was generally regarded by the Athenians as their archetypal ancestral figure.[42] It was during his reign that the contest between Athena and Poseidon is reported to have taken place.

ἀγωγῇ
According to Ludwig's edition, the manuscripts BCEG read ἀγωγῇ, ADLP ἀρωγῇ. Vogt does not give any alternative reading for ἀρωγῇ. Cousin, Abel and Giordano (ad opera di Posidone) opt for the former reading, Ludwig, Vogt and Saffrey (par l'action de Poséidon) for the latter. I would favour the reading ἀγωγῇ, if only one could be sure of Ludwig's apparatus. Poseidon caused the disaster. To say that it occurred with his help (ἀρωγῇ) would be too much of an euphemism. However, C and E do *not* read ἀγωγῇ but ἀρωγῇ. Before opting for ἀγωγῇ one would like to know whether it is in any of the MSS. at all.

μυρίον ἐκ πόντοιο κυκώμενον ἤλυθε κῦμα,
πάντα πολυφλοίσβοισιν ἑοῖς ῥεέθροισιν ἱμάσσον.
This is, as Vogt notes, an echo of *Il.* 21, 240: δεὶνον δ' ἀμφ' Ἀχιλῆα κυκώμενον ἵστατο κῦμα (Achilles is attacked by the river Skamander). There is no (allegorical) interpretation of this specific verse by Proclus. See above under 2. *Allegorical interpretation* for the possible allegorical meaning.

> **Tr. 31-4:** *Hearken me, from whose face flashes forth holy light. / Give me, who is roaming around the earth, a blest harbour, / give my soul holy light from your sacred myths, / and wisdom, and love.*

vs. 31 ἡ φάος ἁγνὸν ἀπαστράπτουσα προσώπου·
The face (προσώπον) of a Neoplatonic philosopher may radiate light. Porphyry *Vita Plotini* § 13, 5ff. tells about Plotinus that, when he spoke, his face (προσώπου αὐτοῦ) shone forth with light (τὸ φῶς

[42] See *OCD* 1996[3] *s.v.* Cecrops.

ἐπιλάμποντος) as an indication of his nous (ἔνδειξις τοῦ νοῦ). Marinus *Vita Procli* § 23 says of Proclus that, when he lectured, his eyes seemed to be full of a certain sparkling (μαρμαρυγῆς) and the rest of his face shared in divine irradiation (τὸ ἄλλο πρόσωπον ἐλλάμψεως θείας μετεῖχεν). Athena as the patron of all philosophers is here likewise represented with a face shining with holy light (φάος ἁγνόν). When the faces of Plotinus and Proclus shine because of participation in the divine intellections, Athena has a shining face because she is these divine intellections (see commentary to vss. 7-8). This verse recurs in Musaeus *Hero and Leander* vs. 56: Hero wanders through the temple of Aphrodite while a charming sparkling shines from her face μαρμαρυγὴν χαρίεσσαν ἀπαστράπτουσα προσώπου.

vs. 32 δὸς δέ μοι ὄλβιον ὅρμον ἀλωομένῳ περὶ γαῖαν,
This is the paternal harbour of the Demiurgic Nous. It means an escape from the horrible *Odyssey* of the soul through the realm of matter (ἀλωομένῳ περὶ γαῖαν) to a blessed existence (ὄλβιος, cf. commentary to *H.* I 45). For the concept of the paternal harbour, see chapter III § 4.3. As we have argued there, it is especially Athena as the goddess of Wisdom, who 'places every partial nous in the whole intellections of the Father' (*In Tim.* I 168, 29-30).

vss. 33-4 δὸς ψυχῇ φάος ἁγνὸν ἀπ' εὐιέρων σέο μύθων | καὶ σοφίην καὶ ἔρωτα.
Athena is asked to give light, wisdom and love from her holy *mythoi* to the soul. I suggest that we take the meaning of these *mythoi* as broadly as possible, including myths like the ones concerning Athena mentioned in the first part of the hymn as well as philosophical writings, which are after all inspired by Athena as the goddess of philosophy (see my commentary to *H.* III 11).

The 'holy light' (φάος ἁγνόν) is the illumination sent by the gods that enables the soul to contemplate the Forms. The knowledge that results from this is not mere discursive human *episteme*, but the divine wisdom that comes from the intellection of the Forms. Cf. the prayer to Athena (*In Tim.* I 168, 22ff.) cited in the commentary to vss. 7-8; for discursive *episteme* as opposed to the intellection of the forms in the paternal harbour, see chapter III § 4.3. The divine illumination inspires us with a love (ἔρως) for the intelligible world (see vss. 35-6). For love as an anagogic power and the fact that it appears in a hymn to the goddess of wisdom, see chapter III § 5.2.

Tr. 34-36: *Blow into my love / a power so great and of such a kind that it pulls me up back again / from the vaults of matter to Olympus, into the abode of your father.*

vss. 34-35 μένος δ' ἔμπνευσον ἔρωτι τοσσάτιον καὶ τοῖον
How to interpret the dative ἔρωτι here? Is Athena asked to breathe force into Proclus' love (Giordano 1957: 49 'e all'amore inspira forza'), or to breathe force into Proclus by means of love (Saffrey 1994: 51 'insouffle par l'amour à mon âme une force'). Both interpretations make sense as far as the content is concerned. As for the Greek, the former interpretation seems to be preferable: ἐμπνέω + dative, *to blow, breathe upon, into* is a standard combination (see L.-S.-J. *s.v.* ἐμπνέω; cf. Proclus *Theol. Plat.* I 14, p. 63, 24 ἐμπνεύσασαι τὴν τῆς κινήσεως αὐτοῖς αἰτίαν; *Theol. Plat.* III 5, p. 19, 10 αἱ προσεχῶς μὲν ἐμπνέουσαι τὸ ζῆν τοῖς αὐγοειδέσιν ὀχήμασιν) as is the expression μένος ἐμπνέω τινί *to breathe force into someone*, e.g. *Il.* 10, 482: τῷ (sc. Diomedes) δ' ἔμπνευσε μένος γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη. Vs. 34ff., then, means: add to my love for the immaterial realm so much of the right kind of power as is necessary to reach it.

vss. 35-36 χθονίων ἀπὸ κόλπων | αὖ ἐρύσῃ πρὸς Ὄλυμπον ἐς ἤθεα πατρὸς ἑῆος.
The abode of Athena's father, Zeus, is the 'bright-shining court of the lofty Father' from *H.* I 32, the Demiurgic Nous. For the fact that the Demiurge resides on the top of Olympus, see e.g. Proclus *In Tim.* I 310, 12 (ἐν τῇ κορυφῇ τοῦ Ὀλύμπου; cf. *Il.* 8, 3); *In Tim.* I 317, 14: Orpheus establishes Zeus on the top of Olympus (ἐκεῖνος ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ Ὀλύμπου κορυφῆς αὐτὸν ἱδρύει); *Theol. Plat.* V 24, p. 91, 4ff. For Olympus as the dwelling-place of the gods, see commentary to *H.* V 7.

The elevation towards the top of Olympus, i.e. reaching the paternal harbour (vs. 32), means an escape of the soul from the realm of matter (χθονίων ἀπὸ κόλπων) back again (αὖ) to the metaphysical realm, its place of origin, see e.g. Proclus *In RP.* II 126, 15ff.: all souls yearn for their natural place, which is above, but matter drags them down. As the oracle (Chaldaean Oracles Fr. 217) says 'for a sweet desire to dwell for always on Olympus with the immortal gods as their companions holds everyone (ὥς κεν Ὄλυμπον ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι συνέμποροι αἰὲν ἔχωσιν·).' Cf. Proclus' prayer *In Tim.* I 168, 23f. (cited in the commentary to vss. 7-8) to Athena to give us wisdom 'while providing us with the Olympian and anagogic goods for the

souls' (πορίζουσα μὲν τὰ 'Ολύμπια καὶ ἀναγωγὰ τῶν ψυχῶν ἀγαθά). For the prayer to be pulled up towards the intelligible realm, cf. *H.* III 14; VI 7.

Tr. 37-42: *And if some grievous error in my life overpowers me / — for I know that I am buffeted by many different unholy actions from different sides, the offences I committed with a foolish spirit —, / be gracious, mild-counselling goddess, preserver of mortals / do not let me become a prey and a spoil for the horrible Punishments / while I lie on the ground, since I declare to belong to you.*

vss. 37-42 εἰ δέ τις ἀμπλακίη με κακὴ βιότοιο δαμάζει—
οἶδα γάρ, ὡς πολλῇσιν ἐρίχθομαι ἄλλοθεν ἄλλαις
πρήξεσιν οὐχ ὁσίαις, τὰς ἤλιτον ἄφρονι θυμῷ—,
ἵλαθι, μειλιχόβουλε, σαόμβροτε, μηδέ μ' ἐάσῃς
ῥιγεδαναῖς Ποιναῖσιν ἕλωρ καὶ κύρμα γενέσθαι
κείμενον ἐν δαπέδοισιν,...

As we have seen, good souls go to the divine dwellings on Olympus. Bad souls, on the contrary, are punished for the fact that they have allowed their passions to carry them away (see commentary on vss. 16-17; on these punishments see also my commentary on *H.* I 37). A prayer to Athena is appropriate in this case because it is Zeus who decrees that the wicked are to be punished, but his will is fulfilled by Athena (Proclus *In RP.* I 102, 1ff.).

Now that the poet starts contemplating his own situation, he breaks out in a cold sweat, as is indicated by the emotional style of these verses. He shows himself only too aware of his errors: he is buffeted by many different ones from all sides, results of a foolish spirit. Both Homeric intertextuality (discussed below) and the use of unusual expressions (the learned variant ἐρίχθομαι instead of the normal ἐρέχθομαι;[43] the two adjectives μειλιχόβουλος and σαόμβροτος otherwise not attested in extant Greek literature) add an extra dimension to these verses.

Homeric reminiscences are found in the vss. 41 and 42. The unjust soul will be the prey and spoil of the avenging daemons (vs. 41 ἕλωρ καὶ κύρμα γενέσθαι). The phrase is borrowed from Homer who uses it to describe the fate that awaits fallen and thus completely defenceless warriors (e.g. *Il.* 5, 488; 17, 150). More precisely, it may refer to

[43] On this variant Wilamowitz 1907 274 n. 1 and L.-S.-J. new supplement *s.v.* ἐρέχθομαι.

Od. 5, 473, where Odysseus expresses his fear that, once he has fallen asleep in the open, he will become a prey for the wild animals (other references to *Od.* 5 in vs. 42 and vss. 51-2).

Proclus will lie helplessly on the ground (vs. 42 κείμενον ἐν δαπέδοισιν), a quotation from Homer *Od.* 11, 577. In this case, the Homeric source-text is significant: it describes the situation of Tityos who undergoes punishment in the Tartarus. Tityos is a giant, and therefore, in Proclus' interpretation, a symbol for the material walk of life a soul may choose (see commentary on vs. 8) and what may consequently come from it. Perhaps, Proclus is hinting here also at the Orphic representation of uninitiated souls who go to Hades and are made there to lie in the mud (Plato *Phd.* 69c6 εἰς Ἅιδου ἀφίκηται ἐν βορβόρῳ κείσεται). Damascius *In Phd.* I § 169 — whose commentary on the *Phaedo* clearly depends on a lost commentary by Proclus (Westerink 1977: 16) — comments: 'The word 'to lie' (κεῖσθαι) describes the helplessness that makes the soul dependent on external impulses, because it has become like a body' (trans. Westerink).[44] This note on the verb 'to lie' fits the present context well: the unholy actions consists in living according to the passions, instead of living according to nous. As a result, the soul becomes body-like.

The recognition of one's faults (οἶδα) was a basic spiritual exercise in most philosophical schools of Antiquity, including that of the Neoplatonists.[45] Only when one has begun to realise one's failures, can one start to improve oneself and in this way obtain salvation: *initium est salutis notitia peccati* (Epicurus as quoted in Seneca *Ep.* 28, 9).

vs. 42 ὅτι τεὸς εὔχομαι εἶναι.

A reminiscence of Odysseus' prayer in Homer *Od.* 5: Odysseus suffered shipwreck after he had left Calypso. He has been swimming for three days, when the island of the Phaeacians comes into sight. Unfortunately, he is in danger of being dashed against the rocks of the coast. Then he sees a river mouth. The river banks would provide a safe landing spot for the exhausted swimmer. Odysseus next prays to the river god to save him by accepting him as a suppliant: ἱκέτης δέ τοι εὔχομαι εἶναι (*Od.* 5, 450). The source-text is meaningful. As we have seen, Proclus often compares the situation of the human soul

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44 Cf. Plotinus *En.* V 1 [10] 2, 23: soul gives the body of heaven (σῶμα οὐρανοῦ) life and 'wakes what lies inert' (ἤγειρε δὲ κείμενον). I owe this reference to J. Sen.

45 See for a discussion of this exercise Thom 1995: 163-4 and Ilsetraut Hadot 1986: 453-455.

trapped in the realm of matter to that of Odysseus almost drowning at sea (see vs. 29). Cf. vs. 51 for another reminiscence of this prayer.

It is a common strategy in the ancient world to declare that one belongs to a deity and in this way oblige the divinity to protect you: see e.g. *Corp. Herm.* I, 32, p. 19, 3ff. (help us father for we are your sons: υἱοὺς δὲ σοῦ) and 1 Cor. 1, 12 (ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ).[46] In the case of Proclus there is something more to it: he is playing the card of theurgical *sympatheia*. He belongs to the series of Athena, and she should for that reason (ὅτι) exercise care and providence towards him, just as she is bound to do so for the whole city of Athens (see commentary on vss. 21-22). For the fact that a deity is obliged to exercise providence towards its products as the pivot of theurgy, see chapter IV § 3 and chapter V § 3.2. The fact that Proclus regularly calls Athena 'our mistress' (see commentary to vs. 22 πότνια) shows that his claim to belong to Athena was a sincere conviction. Marinus *Vita Procli* § 6 provides us with the biographical information on which it was based: Proclus was born in Byzantium, a city which was like Athens dedicated to Athena. She 'as it were delivered him, being the cause (τοῦ εἶναι αἰτία) in so far as he was born in that city.' Later on, she appeared herself to him in a dream and called him to philosophy. Because of this, Proclus 'entered in a very intimate relation with the goddess, with the result that he celebrated her rites especially and obeyed her laws very enthusiastically.'

Tr. 43-6: *Give steady and propitious health to my limbs, / and drive the herds of bitter, flesh-wasting illnesses away, / yes, I beg you, my queen, and stop with your immortal hand / the entire misery of black pains.*

vss. 43-46 δὸς γυίοις μελέων σταθερὴν καὶ ἀπήμον' ὑγείην,
σαρκοτακῶν δ' ἀπέλαυνε πικρῶν ἀγελάσματα νούσων,
ναί, λίτομαι, βασίλεια, καὶ ἀμβροσίῃ σέο χειρὶ
παῦσον ὅλην κακότητα μελαινάων ὀδυνάων.

After a prayer for spiritual goods Proclus continues to pray for health. He has good reason to address this prayer to Athena. According to him, she is worshipped as Ὑγίεια (Health)[47] because she takes care that, in the words of Plato's *Ti.* 33a, the cosmos remains for ever whole and perfect and neither ages nor falls ill.[48] The same task is

[46] Examples taken from Festugière 1966: 1588.
[47] Athena was indeed worshipped with the cult title Ὑγίεια in Athena from early times onwards, see *OCD* 1996[3]: 202.
[48] *In Crat.* § 185, p. 113, 9ff: ...προσηγόρευται καὶ Ὑγίεια...ὅλον δ' ἀεὶ καὶ

attributed to Paiêon in *H.* I 21-3, as well as Asclepius (see commentary to *H.* I 21-3 *ad loc.*). For prayers for health, see also *H.* I 42 and VI 5-6 with my commentary.

Proclus continues in the pathetic vein of the previous verses: exceptional words (two times a *hapax legomenon*: σαρκοτακῶν, ἀγελάσματα); an apostrophe (ναί, λίτομαι, βασίλεια), a Homeric expression (μελαινάων ὀδυνάων, cf. *Il.* 4, 191).

The image of a deity curing a disease with his or her hand is widespread in ancient literature, see e.g. Herondas 4, 17-18 (of Asclepius), *Anthologia Graeca* 9, 525, 8 (of Apollo); health is often said to be caused by a gentle hand (ἠπιόχειρος ὑγείη), e.g. *Orph. H.* 23, 8; 29, 18.

Tr. 47-50: *Give calm winds to the voyage of my life, / children, a spouse, fame, happiness, lovely joy, / persuasion, conversations with friends, nimble wit, / power against my enemies, a place of prominence among the people.*

vss. 47-50 δὸς βιότῳ πλώοντι γαληνιόωντας ἀήτας,
τέκνα, λέχος, κλέος, ὄλβον, ἐυφροσύνην ἐρατεινήν,
πειθώ, στωμυλίην φιλίης, νόον ἀγκυλομήτην,
κάρτος ἐπ' ἀντιβίοισι, προεδρίην ἐνὶ λαοῖς.

1. *Structure*

Proclus moves from health to external goods. I suggest that we separate vss. 47-48 from vss. 49-50.

Vss. 47-48 contain items that one may expect from a benevolent deity in general: a smooth passage through the sea of life (vs. 47) equipped with different kinds of goods, like children, fame and ὄλβος (vs. 48). Compare *H.* V 9-11: because of Aphrodite's protection, the Lycians had fine offspring (vss. 9-10) and a tranquil sea of life (vs. 11 βιότοιο γαλήνη), which was full of good things (ἠπιόδωρος); *H.* VI 4-6: Proclus prays for a radiant course of life (vs. 4 αἰγλήεσσαν ἐμοῦ βιότοιο πορείην), heavy with all kinds of goods (vs. 5 βριθομένην ἀγαθοῖσι) and that he may stay healthy (vs. 5-6) as he does in *H.* VII 43-46; *H.* I 42-45: prayer for health (vs. 42), followed by a prayer for κλέος (vs. 43-44 εὐκλείης τ' ἐπιβησον ἐμέ κτλ.) and ὄλβος (vs. 45 ὄλβον δ' ἀστυφέλικτον ἀπ' εὐσεβίης ἐρατεινῆς). For a prayer for a smooth passage through life, cf. also *H.* II 19-20 (καὶ

τέλειον καὶ ἀγήρων καὶ ἄνοσον διαφυλάττουσα τὸν κόσμον.

πολύμοχθον ἐμὴν βιότοιο πορείην ἰθύνοις), for fame, cf. also *H.* III 17 (καὶ κλέος εὐεπίης φρενοθελγέος αἰὲν ἔχουσαν). If we take the prayer for a wife in vs. 48 as a logical compliment to the prayer for children, the only item unparalleled in vss. 47-48 is that of ἐυφροσύνη. However, as a specific form of happiness (ὄλβος) it does not strike one as odd in this list.

Vss. 49-50, on the other hand, consist of items that we do not find in the other hymns. I would argue that these are especially related to Athena as the patron of philosophical wisdom and the city of Athens: teaching philosophy requires the skill of persuasion (πειθώ), whereas Platonic philosophy in its purest form consists in discussions (στωμυλίην φιλίης). On the other hand, the servant of lady Athena is under the threat from his Christian adversaries and therefore needs Athena's cunning to outwit his enemies (νόον ἀγκυλομήτην, κάρτος ἐπ' ἀντιβίοισι). His success against his enemies and his qualities as a philosopher will assure Proclus of a prominent position in Athens (προεδρίην ἐνὶ λαοῖς).

2. *Commentary on details vss.* 47-50

δὸς βιότῳ πλώοντι γαληνιόωντας ἀήτας

We should distinguish between this sea voyage and that of vs. 32. The latter is the voyage of spiritual development that results in an escape from the material realm and finding a safe refuge in the intelligible realm. The former is merely a request for a calm lifetime free from troubles. One may very well enjoy a smooth passage through life without ever reaching the paternal harbour. In the case of the spiritual voyage, the final destination is stressed, for it entails the salvation of the soul. In the case of the voyage of life, it is all about the passage itself, for its ends in (bodily) death. See *H.* VI 4 (passage through life) and 12 (spiritual voyage) for the same distinction.

τέκνα, λέχος

According to Wilamowitz 1907: 274, children, a wife, and all other things prayed for in vss. 47-50, are of no interest to a philosopher like Proclus. They only matter to someone who plans a career outside the school ('das ist ein Gebet für Weltkinder, für die Schüler, die aus der Universität in das Leben treten wollen'). This hymn would be something these *Weltkinder* could take with them into the world. I disagree with Wilamowitz that these are not goods a philosopher prays for. As has been shown above, the requests in vss. 47-48 recur elsewhere in

the hymns, e.g. in *H.* I, about which Wilamowitz 1907: 275 remarks: 'Das ist Proclos persönlich.' I consequently reject the idea that this is necessarily an example prayer given to departing students.

The only two items mentioned in this prayer that seem really to be out of line with Proclus' interests are those of children and wife. However, there was nothing that prevented Neoplatonic philosophers from being married. Some important Neoplatonists like Porphyry and Plutarch of Athens were married. It is true that according to Marinus *Vita Procli* § 17 Proclus 'never had, by his own choice (διὰ τὸ μηδὲ αὐτὸς ἑλέσθαι), any experience with marriage or children, although he received many offers of marriage from noble and wealthy families.' If we are to trust Marinus, this is indeed an indication that this hymn was composed for someone other than Proclus.

There is, however, good reason to be suspicious about Marinus' claim. According to Damascius, *Vita Isidori* Fr. *124 (p. 105f.), Syrianus wanted Proclus to marry Aedesia. He would have done so, if it had not been for the fact that a god intervened (εἰ μὴ θεῶν τις ἀπεκώλυσεν ἐπὶ γάμον ὁρμῆσαι τὸν Πρόκλον). This testimony could lend an extra perspective to the unusual prayer for a wife. Prayers for children are not uncommon in Greek hymns;[49] lovers may pray for divine assistance to win the heart of their beloved, but a prayer for a wife is something different. In Antiquity, marriage was after all a kind of businessarrangement, which did not necessarily demand any love or affection. If one was well off, as Proclus and most of his fellow Neoplatonists in Athens were, one could easily get married without divine assistance. In Proclus' case, however, marriage was forbidden by a god, and he had therefore good reason to pray to the gods to lift this ban on marriage. This is of course all mere speculation, but it may serve to show that Proclus may well have prayed for marriage and children.

ὄλβος

The word ὄλβος may refer to happiness in general, but also to material wealth, and as such be an equivalent to πλοῦτος.[50] Although money mattered to some degree to some Neoplatonists, especially to the members of the Alexandrian school who were considerably less

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[49] For examples of prayers for children in hymns and a discussion of these, see Keyßner 1932: 154-155.

[50] On the meaning of ὄλβος in Greek hymns, see Keyßner 1932: 136ff. esp. pp.139-140.

well off than their Athenian counterparts,[51] love of money was generally regarded as a vice. Proclus was no exception to this rule, as his own writings show,[52] and as Marinus testifies.[53] We should therefore take ὄλβος in the former meaning of happiness instead of wealth.

εὐφροσύνην ἐρατεινήν
Ἐυφροσύνη is the joy that characterizes the lives of the Olympic gods. See e.g. *In RP.* I 87, 19; *Theol. Plat.* I 24, p. 107, 4; *In Parm.* I 667, 18. This state of bliss can also be achieved by human souls. It consists in the movement towards nous, away from matter (see e.g. *In Alc.* 127, 13-4). Hence it is a spiritual pleasure, different from physical pleasure (ἡδονή). For an explanation of this difference, see Proclus *In RP.* I 131, 14ff. refering to Plato *Ti.* 80b5-8: εὐφροσύνη belongs to sensible people, physical pleasure to the senseless.

πειθώ
The power of persuasion is an important asset for every teacher, especially in the case of a Neoplatonist, whose hard task is to persuade his students of the at first sight less obvious Neoplatonic world view. Following Plato *Grg.* 454e3-455a7, Proclus *In Alc.* 309, 9-311, 13 distinguishes between two sorts of persuasion (πειθώ): the persuasion of belief (πιστευτικὸς πειθώ) and the didactic persuasion (διδασκαλικὸς πειθώ). The former is directed to a philosophically less developed audience and is about correct opinions (δόξαι), whereas the latter, directed to a more sophisticated audience is about more exact forms of knowledge. Which one a teacher has to use depends on his audience.

Comparable prayers for persuasive powers are found in Synesius, see Synesius *H.* 3 (5): after extolling Christ in the first part of the hymn (vs. 1-30, cf. Proclus *H.* VII 7-30), he prays to Christ to have pity upon his soul fettered to the material body (vs. 31-33), health (34-35, cf. Proclus *H.* VII 43-46), and to lend the power of persuasion to his

[51] Olympiodoros *In Gorg.* 40, 7, p. 205, 28ff. ed. Westerink observes that even Socrates wished to receive money, though not a great deal, for he needed it.

[52] See e.g. *In Alc.* 110, 4-111, 6: it is typical for cheap and ignoble souls to understand happiness (εὐδαιμονία) in terms of wealth and possession.

[53] Marinus *Vita Procli* § 4: 'It is impossible to describe how much he avoided the love of money, but ever since childhood he neglected his parent's wealth, although it was considerable, out of his great love for philosophy' (trans. Rosán); see also *o.c.* § 13: after some political troubles, Proclus had left Athens for some time. On his return, a certain Rufinus offered him a large sum of money, but Proclus 'did not at all choose to accept it under any circumstance.'

words (vs. 36 νεῦσον μὲν μύθοις πειθώ), and glory to his deeds (vs. 37-39, cf. Proclus *H.* VII 48); Synesius *H.* 4 (6) prays to Christ for a good reputation among the people (32 ἐν λαοῖς ἀγαθὰν ἄνοιγε φάμαν, cf. *H.* VII 50 προεδρίην ἐνὶ λαοῖς), and that he may crown him with the flower of persuasion (vs. 33 πειθοῦς πραϋλόγῳ στέφων ἀώτῳ).

στωμυλίην φιλίης

The correct reading of vs. 49 is a matter of discussion. Most editors, following the majority of the manuscripts, read '…στωμυλίην φιλίης, νόον ἀγκυλομήτην,…' (Cousin, Ludwig, Giordano, Vogt). Some, however, find this reading unacceptable and either choose to emend the genitive φιλίης into an accusative and insert a comma after στωμυλίην (Tychsen: πειθώ, στωμυλίην, φιλίαν,…; Boissonade: πειθώ, στωμυλίην, φιλίην,…), or just insert a comma after στωμυλίην and link the genitive φιλίης with νόον ἀγκυλομήτην (Wilamowitz 1902: 274 στωμυλίην, φιλίης νόον ἀγκυλομήτην, which he paraphrases as 'Urteil in der Freundschaft [den wahren Freund zu erkennen]').

I choose to follow the majority of the editors. The criticism by Wilamowitz 1907: 274 n. 2 on this reading ('49 ist so geschraubt, daß man zweifeln mag; aber CΤΩΜΥΛΙΗ ΦΙΛΙΗC ist überhaupt unsinnig') is not justified. We may interpret it as the conversations one has with friends (Giordano 1957: 51 'vaghezza faconda d'amicizia'; Saffrey 1994: 51 'le plaisir d'une conversation entre amis'). This seems to me to be a proper prayer for an intellectual. I find Wilamowitz' solution harder to accept since neither νόος nor the adjective ἀγκυλομήτης carry a connotation of judgement in them. The fact that we can understand the text as it stands makes any emendation unnecessary.

νόον ἀγκυλομήτην

The epithet ἀγκυλομήτης is a standard epithet for Kronos in Homer (e.g. *Il.* 4, 59), although in later Greek poetry he has to share it with others, e.g. Prometheus in Hesiod (e.g. *Th.* 546). In Proclus, the adjective occurs seven times and is in all cases connected with Kronos. The original meaning of the adjective in connection with Kronos is probably 'Kronos with the curved sickle', but by the time of Hesiod and from than onwards the word is used in the sense of 'crooked of counsel' (West 1966: 158, commentary to Hesiod *Th.* 18).

For Proclus Kronos is pure Nous: (see chapter III § 2.2, *Figure* 1): as the first entity in the noeric triad, he is the object of intellection of all three members of that triad, including himself (on Kronos, see

Proclus *Theol. Plat.* V 5, pp. 20, 23-24, 21). The adjective ἀγκυλομήτης refers to this movement of Nous towards itself (Proclus *In Crat.* § 110, p. 62, 28f.: ὁ δὲ Κρόνος κατὰ τὴν εἰς ἑαυτὸν στροφὴν ὅθεν καὶ 'ἀγκυλομήτης').

What then is the νόος ἀγκυλομήτης? Previous translators take it as 'subtlety of mind' (Meunier 1935: 104 la pénétration subtile de l'esprit; Giordano 1957: 51 mente sagace; Saffrey 1994: 51 un esprit subtil). However, in the light of the foregoing discussion, I would argue that it must refer either to some sort of craftiness or to the philosophical quality of turning towards one true self. As for the second alternative, it is an obvious request from a philosopher. However, it would be strange that Proclus prays for this in this part of the hymn which is concerned with external goods, whereas there is a whole section (vss. 32-42) that deals with philosophical goods. In the present context, it seems to me to be a request for craftiness, especially in combination with the following one for power against enemies. Athena is after all the goddess of cunning warfare as opposed to the brutal force employed by Ares, as is apparent from her epithet πολύμητις (see e.g. *Homeric Hymn* 28 (to Athena) 2). Such a request is not be unprecedented, cf. e.g. Pindar *P.* 2, 84f. Pindar, in accordance with archaic Greek ethics, hopes to be a friend of his friends (cf. vs. 49 στωμυλίην φιλίης), and an enemy of his enemies. He will descend on them like a wolf, 'in ever varying ways by crooked paths' (ἄλλοτε πατέων ὁδοῖς σκολιαῖς), i.e. cunningly. For ἀγκύλος paralleled to σκολιός in the sense of 'crafty', see West 1966: 158, commentary to Hesiod *Th.* 18.

κάρτος ἐπ' ἀντιβίοισι

Athena has been depicted in this hymn as a 'lover of war', it is therefore appropriate for Proclus to ask this militant goddess for strength ἐπ' ἀντιβίοισι. Who or what are they?

A first possibility is that these are the enemies Athena is fighting in the first part of the hymn: the forces of matter and plurality opposing unity and transcendence. However, since Proclus has already been praying extensively for Athena's assistance lest he may be overcome by these forces (vss. 37-41), and since the object of his prayer has shifted from spiritual goods to more concrete ones, I think this less likely.

A second one is offered by various translators. They interpret it as a request for the force necessary to resist the setbacks in life. Meunier

1935: 104 'la force de résister aux adversités de la vie'; Giordano 1957: 51 'forza contro le avversità della vita'; Saffrey 1994: 51 'la force devant les obstacles de la vie.' However, Proclus has already prayed for a smooth voyage through life (vs. 47). To pray now for force against possible hardship seems redundant, if not at odds with the foregoing request.

In my opinion, we should rather think of human adversaries. What would be more logical after the prayer for the pleasure of having friends (vs. 49) to turn to their opposite, one's enemies? It is tempting to identify these human enemies with the Typhonic winds and the giant vultures mentioned by Marinus in *Vita Procli* § 15 and identified by Saffrey 1975: 55 as the Christians who forced Proclus to leave Athens for a year. In that case, this prayer would be more meaningful in the context of this hymn: Athena, this is your city (vss. 21-30), I am your servant (vs. 42), but now the Christians are trying to take over and we are on the receiving end because we stay loyal to you. You are obliged to help us.

Tr. 51-2: *Hearken, hearken mistress, I come to you, begging much, / because of pressing necessity. And you, lend me a gentle ear.*

vs. 51 κέκλυθι, κέκλυθ', ἄνασσα· πολύλλιστος δέ σ' ἱκάνω

An echo of *Od.* 5, 445 (κλῦθι, ἄναξ, ὅτις ἐσσί· πολύλλιστον δὲ σ' ἱκάνω). It is the opening verse of Odysseus's prayer to the god of the river on the island of the Phaeacians, see commentary to vs. 42. As Vogt 1957b: 372f. points out, the accusative πολύλλιστον in Homer is no reason to correct the nominative πολύλλιστος in Proclus into an accusative πολύλλιστον (as was suggested by Rzach). All the more so, because there are good examples of the active use of πολύλλιστος, for which see Vogt.

I suggest that Proclus deviates on purpose from the Homeric source text. He tries to outdo the Homeric Odysseus as a suppliant in need: the imperative (κέκλυθι) is repeated and the accusative πολύλλιστον is changed into an active: in the Homeric verse, the god is sought by many prayers, but it is left unspecified by whom, whereas in this hymn, it is Proclus who does the abundant praying.

vs. 52 χρειοῖ ἀναγκαίῃ·

Another reference to Homer *Il.* 8, 57: the Trojans fight the Greeks because of pressing need, i.e. to protect their wives and children.

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